



PHD

**Unity, efficiency and perceptions: the European Union interventions in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014)**

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# **UNITY, EFFICIENCY, AND PERCEPTIONS:**

THE EUROPEAN UNION INTERVENTIONS IN GEORGIA (2008)

AND UKRAINE (2014)

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Politics, Languages, and International Studies

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To the memory of my grandparents:

Anna, Carlo, Filomena and Mario

E aspiette che chiove  
L'acqua te 'nfonne e va  
Tanto l'aria s'adda cagna  
Ma po' quanno chiove  
L'acqua te 'nfonne e va  
Tanto l'aria s'adda cagna  
(P. Daniele)



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## **Abstract**

Over the past decades, the European Union (EU) has projected itself as an international actor that, among its aims, considers the resolution of conflicts in its neighborhood as a very important portion of its foreign policy. And yet, this organisation continues to encounter great resistance by several actors in the international arena. This thesis examines the strategies of conflict resolution put in place by the EU in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014): this is to understand what tools the Union adopted, why, and what factors hampered the organisation's exercise of its actorness. The thesis does so by adopting the liberal-institutional approach to international relations, and especially its focus on interdependence and non-military strategies to conflict resolution. This theoretical approach rests on the classification of the Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts as hybrid wars. In fact, these wars, it is argued, respond negatively to coercive means of diplomacy. For this reason the thesis argues that the EU is particularly well situated, ideologically and structurally, to address them.

Through the methodological lenses of comparative analysis, qualitative content analysis, and elite interviews, the thesis focuses on both factual realities and narratives to understand the crucial role of the EU's missions in Georgia and Ukraine. The comparative moment of the thesis aims at identifying the overall approach of the European Union to conflicts arising in its neighborhood and the main obstacles that hampered it. This thesis focuses especially on the initial moment of the EU's engagement in the two scenarios, exemplified by the fact that the analysis of the deployment of the EUMM and EUAM missions focuses on the first 12 to 18 months of operations. This decision was made in order to isolate the initial rational process that

led to the formulation of specific policies in the two contexts by the EU, as well as indicating what factors delegitimised the Union from the beginning.

The findings of the analysis indicate that the EU has adopted similar strategies in Georgia and Ukraine. These have included various tools of soft diplomacy, such as the European Neighborhood Policy, the EU Monitoring Mission and EU Advisory Mission, and the development of programs of financial aid in the two countries. These strategies are, on one side, in line with the liberal-institutionalist approach to conflict resolution that focuses on the creation of spaces of intersubjective dialogue among parties and on the promotion of incentives for the cessation of hostilities. On the other, they reflect the normative nature of the EU that, despite the various interests of its members in Georgia and Ukraine, operated as an actor tasked with the spread of values associated with liberal-institutionalism as an ideology.

In this sense, the thesis confirms the idea that the EU is an international normative actor that attempts at keeping peace in its neighborhood through means of soft-diplomacy. However, the thesis finds that the ability of the European Union to deliver on these prospects has been greatly hampered by two factors: first, while the EU enjoyed horizontal coherence in the two scenarios (for example, the policies implemented did not contradict one the other), it lacked vertical coherence. This means that the different positions of its members, mainly related to their economic ties with Georgia and Ukraine and to their stances towards an expansionist Russia, undermined the EU's actorness in foreign policy. Second, the Union itself has, through its diplomatic tools, antagonised Russia. This led the Kremlin to perceive the organization as a threat and *de facto* impeded the creation of a truly comprehensive dialogue among all the parties involved in the Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts.

## **List of acronyms**

AA	Association Agreement
ABL	Administrative Boundary Line
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BSS	Black Sea Sinergy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CEU	Council of European Union
CPCC	Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
ECEU	East and Central European Countries
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EEA	European Economic Area
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament

ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission in Ukraine
EUC	European Council
EUGS	European Union Global Strategy
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FPA	Framework Participation Agreement
GSSR	Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic
HRF	Human Rights First
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IO	International Organisation
IR	International Relations
MAP	Membership Action Plan
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NAM	Needs Assessment Mission
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNOMIG	United Nations Observatory Mission in Georgia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
WB	World Bank
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

## Map of Georgia (and separatist regions)



Source: The Economist

<https://www.economist.com/briefing/2008/08/14/a-scripted-war>



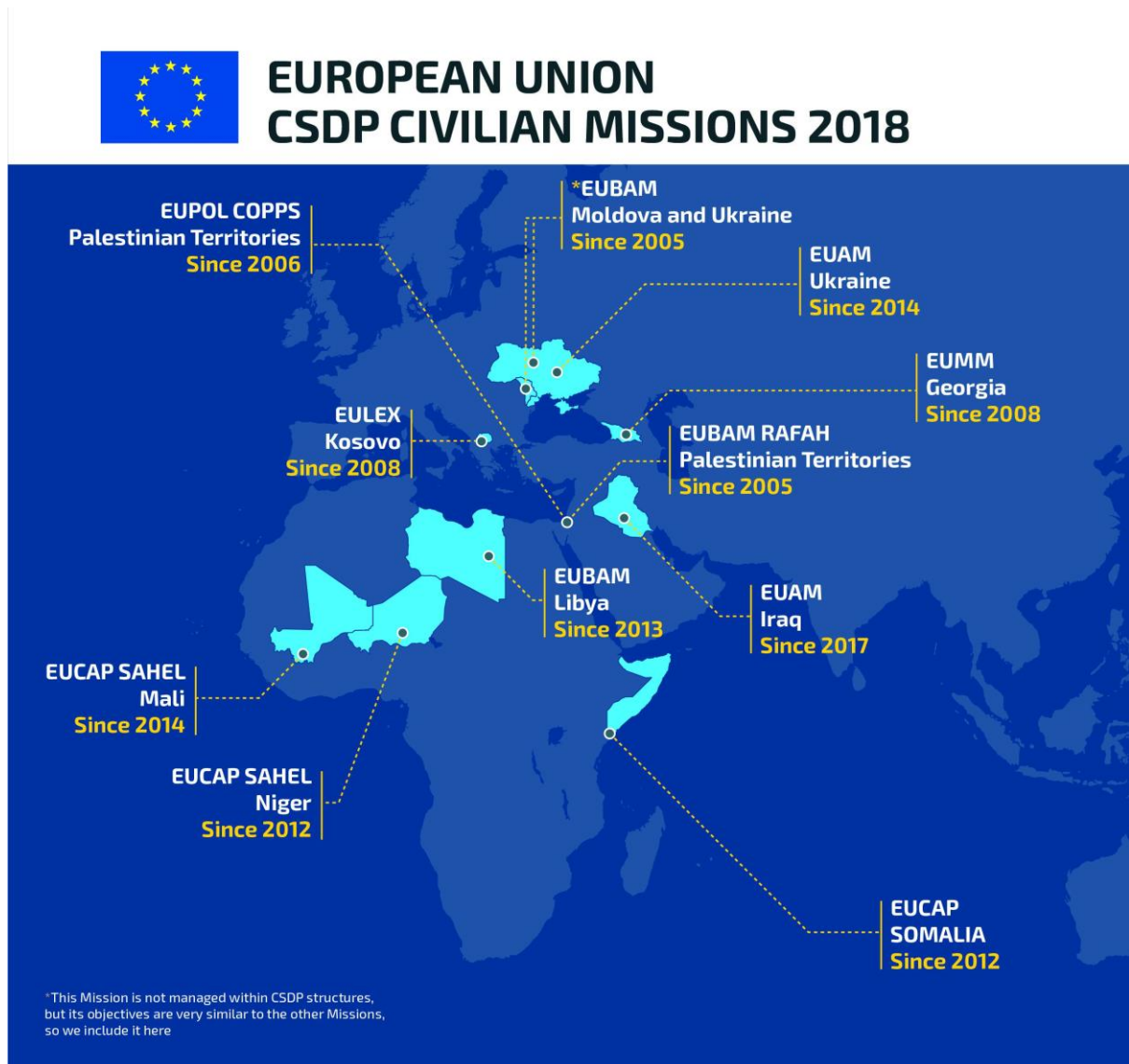
## Map of Ukraine (including Crimea and Donbas region)



Source: The Economist

<https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2015/06/04/crisis-in-ukraine>

## Map of the ongoing European Union CSDP Missions and Operations



Source: European External Action Service

[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet-csdp\\_missions\\_and\\_operations\\_05-03-2018.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet-csdp_missions_and_operations_05-03-2018.pdf)



## **Part I**

### **Chapter One – Introduction**

#### **1. Introduction**

The role of the European Union (EU) in international politics and its foreign policy approaches have been widely debated since the foundations for the Maastricht Treaty were laid in 1992. In particular, in recent times, the organisation has been subject to widespread criticism on a number of issues. These criticisms have centred on key themes such as its inability to formulate a single economic and monetary policy (Bellamy and Weale, 2015), the difficulties in building coherent enlargement and integration policies (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2002: 501-502), the internal divisions among member states with regard to security and defence issues (Howorth, 2014: 14-16), and, most recently, a lack of a unitary response to the migration and refugee crisis (Catchpole and Coulombier, 2015). The extensive debates that have emerged from analyses of the aforementioned crises have led to the creation of a considerable body of literature that considers the EU, in its entirety, as currently facing an unprecedented crisis (Habermas, 2012; Demetriou, 2015; Dinan, Nugent and Paterson, 2017).

Among the various issues that scholars have identified as constituting the current crisis of the EU, the institution's role in conflict resolution has emerged as a strong contender, a discussion that has happened simultaneously on the academic and policy front. On the one hand, several academics such as Sten Rynning (2003: 480) highlighted how the last two decades have been shaped by an inherent internal tension within the organisation that, in his and other academics' views, has been unable to

reconcile the role of being a civilian actor (Cornish and Edwards, 2001: 587-588) and the need to formulate a more state-like foreign policy (Heiselberg, 2003). In addition, conservative scholars such as Robert Kagan offered the much more pessimistic view that the ability of the EU to formulate concrete policies is restrained by the fact that “EU foreign policy initiatives tend to be short-lived and rarely backed by sustained agreement on the part of the various European powers. That is one reason they are so easily rebuffed” (Kagan, 2002: 65-66). The breakout of conflicts in Georgia and then Ukraine has revived interest in the field, as well as re-sparking doubts about the role of the EU as a global actor and, in particular, as a conflict manager. Karen Smith has identified this renewed trend in scholarship in “European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World” (Smith, 2013: Chapter 7) and while this work has been published before the Ukrainian protests started, it flagged the road to these events.

On the foreign policy front, the crises in Georgia and Ukraine galvanised those anti-European narratives that called for the renewed importance of sovereign statehood in contemporary times, de facto questioning the role of the Union in shaping states behaviour. Ghia Nodia, education minister under former Georgian President Saakashvili, highlighted that ‘Georgians are suffering from a kind of European fatigue as there is nothing tangible coming’, adding that ‘Putin looks stronger and more consistent, and Georgians have lost confidence that the EU can be a credible actor’ (Nodia, 2015). Analysts such as Ewald Bohlke and Maria Davydchik (2013) went so far as to argue that ‘Brussels has lost sight of the most important foreign policy concern: providing security and prosperity in its immediate neighbourhood’.

Similarly, on 9 May 2016, Boris Johnson declared that ‘if you want an example of EU foreign policy-making on the hoof, and the EU’s pretensions to be running a defence policy, that have caused real trouble, then look at what has happened in Ukraine’

(Johnson, 2016). Derived from a long-standing antagonism towards the EU's "Eastern partnership", Russian policy-makers blamed the EU for acting as a destabilising factor in the region and, implicitly, of causing the crisis in Ukraine (Grant, 2016).

From the perspectives mentioned above, it seems clear that an extensive body of literature exists, both in the academic and policy planes, which aims to depict the EU approach to foreign policy as ineffective and potentially counter-productive in relation to conflict resolution.

It almost seems to look at a picture casting a shadow over the main and, most importantly, oldest European project: the absence of war and prosperity on the continent. In one word: peace. However, since the end of the Second World War (WWII) this project has evolved and, with it, also the role of the EU. In fact, as simply as put in Article 1(a) of the Treaty of Lisbon "the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail".

While 'the promotion of peace' (Treaty of Lisbon, Art. 2.1) started within its own borders and its Member States, an expansion of the European values beyond its boundaries has been recognised as not just a responsibility for the EU (Lucarelli and Manners 2006) but also a necessary external action to take forward in order to maintain stability and internal security.

This concept is clearly explained, again, in the Treaty of Lisbon (Art. 2.5) highlighting that "(i)n its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection

of human rights”. With the enlargements of 2004 and then of 2007, it is interesting to note how the European territory has stretched to its eastern neighbourhood, specifically, towards the former Soviet Union (Ukraine) and the shores of the Black Sea (looking at the Caucasus).

It is undeniable that because of historical and geographical reasons, since its establishment, the EU has faced countless issues concerning security inside and outside its own borders. As anticipated, these situations have inevitably driven the EU to consider the nature of its own mission and, consequently, how to shape itself in order to maintain peace. This reflection has led towards a deeper understanding of its role as an international actor in the field of security. While it could be argued that this has always been the case, it has to be underlined how events unfolded after the end of the Cold War brought this idea in front of the eyes of the entire world.

In fact, developments such as security including terrorism, violent conflicts and failed states (Freire et al. 2015: 178) contributed to ‘a deeper focus on security-related matters, and to the institutional consolidation of a set of mechanisms and procedures to address the many challenges the Union faces in its enlarged neighbourhood’. (Freire and Simao: 2013) Since the beginning of the expansion of the interests and competences of the EU, there has been a significant increase in the literature aimed to address the actions of the EU as a security actor. The author has found particularly interesting and helpful the framework constructed by Freire and Simao (2013) which has been explaining the evolution of the dynamics through two major approaches: the first expanded around ‘the idea of European integration as a peace project based on functionalist approaches to political relations’ (Mitrany, 1966; Haas, 1964): as they explain in their study, ‘through this process, a security community developed, within which states shared security concerns and mutual expectations of peaceful change’ (Deutsch et al., 1957; Freire and Simao, 2013). As argued also by Waever (1998), this

represented the base on which the European countries formed a community, with the clear aim to avoid war. Following this study, the second approach can be explained through the improvement of the process of integration on foreign and security issues (Hyde-Price, 2004; Kaldor et al., 2007; Menon, 2009; Bono, 2004). 'The institutionalisation of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) with the Single European Act (1986), and its consolidation in Maastricht (1992) as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), enlarged the debate on European security and the role of the EU in this context'. (Freire and Simao, 2013:464)

What had been defined as a civilian actor (Duchene, 1972) was facing more and more security challenges at its borders which led to debating the military capabilities of the EU as 'a necessary complement to the existing soft policy tools (such as structural reforms through association agreements and deeper integration processes in economic and political terms) for security provision' (Freire and Simao, 2013; Howorth, 2003). As highlighted by Freire and Simao (2013) 'this context led to the incorporation of soft and hard security logics in the EU's actorness, central to its approach to regional and global dynamics' (Waeber, 2000; Manners, 2006).

The role of the "EU as a security actor" it is a concept has been largely developed or, actually, mainly been built on soft security mechanisms, such as integration, enlargement, stabilisation and neighbourhood policies, its normative acquis, and of course, the deployment of CSDP missions. More specifically, because of the focus of this study, it is interesting to outline the main points of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which has launched over 30 civilian missions and military operations since it became a reality almost 15 years ago. To begin with, after the Lisbon Treaty, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has been named Common Security and Defence Policy. The range of tasks is set out in the EU Treaty:



humanitarian and rescue tasks; conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making; joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance tasks; post-conflict stabilisation tasks. (EEAS, 2018) In 2003, the first EU missions launched were the EU's policing mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a military operation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Since then, of these missions, 22 were civilian and 11 were military, and one – in Darfur – mixed. As of today (beginning of 2018), there are 16 ongoing CSDP operations, 10 civilian and six military. (EEAS, 2018). As highlighted by the EEAS<sup>1</sup>, CSDP missions and operations are a substantially unique tool that allows for direct action, rapidly and in less permissive environments if need be, to manage and help resolve a conflict or crisis. This is normally done at the request of the country to which assistance is being provided and always in full respect of international law (this is the case for both Georgia and Ukraine, in fact, both of them formally invited the EU to start a mission on their own territory). EU decisions to deploy a mission or operation also take into account the EU's security interests and are tailored to the local circumstances and to the tasks that need to be implemented. Up to now 18 Framework Participation Agreements (FPA) have been signed in order to facilitate such participation. (EEAS, 2018)

In terms of planning and conduct procedures there are four fundamental characteristics to look at: 1. Decision-making; 2. Force generation; 3. Command and control structures; 4. Financing mechanisms. The first characteristic includes the decisions to establish and to launch missions and operations require the approval of all Member States through a Council Decision. The planning process is governed by crisis management procedures. The second characteristic describes the majority of

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with EEAS staff, Brussels, February 2018

assets and personnel required for military operations as well as civilian missions are provided by Member States. The third characteristic explains how during the conduct phase, the Political and Security Committee exercises political control and provides strategic direction of both civilian and military crisis management missions and operations, under the authority of the Council and the High Representative. Each mission and operation have a single and identifiable chain of command for its safe and efficient conduct. However, for the purpose of this research, it is interesting to note that all civilian missions are commanded by the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) of the EEAS. Civilian missions are financed (fourth characteristic) through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) budget. The common costs of military operations cannot be funded by the EU budget and are instead covered by Member States through the so-called Athena mechanism.

The EU has conceptualised security in innovative ways, 'bringing together the deepening of integration, which led to the establishment of a security community and the development of tools to act outside its borders'. (Freire and Simao, 2013) These two dimensions can be identified in two fundamental texts: the European Security Strategy (Council of the European Union, 2003), and the Report on its Implementation (Council of the European Union, 2008), because they acknowledge the immense 'contribution of the EU to regional peace and stability in Europe and the challenges that its success poses to its nature as a global actor, with increasingly global responsibilities'. (Freire and Simao, 2013)

Eventually, it is the comprehensive approach and actions implemented by the EU that defines it as a security actor. In fact, the mixed nature of CSDP missions, combining civilian and military aspects and performing activities of prevention, assurance, protection and compulsion (Kirschner and Sperling, 2007; Freire and Simao, 2013), contributed to the image of the EU as a more complete and coherent security actor.

The enlargement of 2004 marked the turning point of ‘the consolidation of a region of peace’ (Freire and Simao, 2013: 466) and, consequently, the stability of the EU borders became an incredibly debated security goal, ‘prompting a more proactive approach from the EU based on principles of legitimacy, and geographical and cultural proximity’ (Freire and Simao, 2013: 466). The importance of these objectives was then developed in two different policies: the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004, and later on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009. (Gänzle, 2007; Christou, 2010; Freire and Simao, 2013)

As it will be seen later on, the EU has been acting mainly through the promotion of cohesive governance structures (Lavenex, 2004) and approaches rooted on shared norms and principles, with important significance for regional security (Smith, 2005; Browning and Joenniemi, 2008; Tonra, 2010). These authors mentioned here stress the idea that, unlike state-actors, EU policies are rooted in the principle of shared-agency towards the promotion of certain values, such as security, economic prosperity, and peaceful coexistence. The idea of cohesive governance structures is fundamentally linked with the notion of interdependence which is crucial in the theoretical framework of this thesis. In fact, in an ever-changing geopolitical context, the EU seeks to promote these values not just through its institutional enlargement, but also via the so-called “politics of inclusion”, that are a set of policies that aim at regulating the relationship between the EU and states, both members and non-members.

The distinction between “politics of inclusion” and “politics of exclusion” is fundamental to understand the notion of cohesiveness of governance structures, as well as important to locate the evolution of the EU as a normative actor in international politics from a historical perspective.

Politics of exclusion refers to those policies that the EU promoted to create clear cut boundaries that distinguished the organisation from other actors in its geopolitical

context. Early membership to the EU is part of these policies, because it clearly marked the geographical and institutional boundaries of those states that belonged to the Organisation and those who didn't. As argued by Smith:

A key feature of the 'politics of exclusion' was the close linkage between the EC and the Cold War international system. The Communities functioned to reinforce the East-West divide, and in turn to reinforce the Western system of alliances and economic institutions. It could be argued that this was true not only at the international level, but also within member countries of the EC, with the establishment and maintenance of anti-communist coalitions and broadly conservative regimes. (Smith, 1996: 19)

Focusing on the first one, politics of inclusion, it can be noticed that these political arrangements made with non-members of the EU aim at progressively including non-member states in the pursuit of the Organisation's policy goals. (Lavenex, 2004) Smith clarifies that the beginning of a shift towards inclusive policies started with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when

The geopolitical boundary, which had seemed permanent, between the East and Central Europe (ECEU) and the east, suddenly appeared to be permeable or leaky. Indeed, the promotion of this permeability by the EC and its members had been a force in the changes within Europe and was to remain a key variable in the subsequent developments. Alongside this, the cultural boundary, which had been in a sense subsumed by the geopolitical realities of the situation, became a significant independent factor. (Smith, 1996:21)

In this sense, cohesive governance structures refer to the idea of a political organisation not just defined by the sovereignty of its member-states and their neighbours, that exceeds the boundaries of voluntarist cooperation. (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2004) As noted by Lavenex, these structures can be categorised in five different manifestations:

- *quasi-membership* for comprehensive forms of association such as the European Economic Area (EEA) and the bilateral treaties concluded with Switzerland;
- *accession association* for the encompassing framework of enlargement negotiations with (until recently) the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE countries), Malta and Cyprus, and, although less developed, also with Turkey and the countries of the western Balkans;
- *neighbourhood association* with the Mediterranean and new eastern neighbours;
- *development co-operation* with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries;
- *transatlantic co-operation* with the USA and Canada. (Lavenex, 2004: 686)

The focus on cohesive governance structures allows this thesis to argue that the EU has been acting as an international normative actor focused on the promotion of certain values, elaborated above, beyond its member states to reach its neighbourhood. In this sense, the creation of a true interdependence between member and non-members of the EU is a fundamental principle in the promotion and legitimisation of the political order that the Organisation's envisages. Interdependence, one of the constitutive cores of the liberal-institutional perspective adopted in this dissertation, may give birth to various issues that, according to Buzan, ranges

from non-politicized (meaning the state [or, in this case, the Union] does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision) through politicized (meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government [i.e. EU] decisions and resources allocation . . . to securitized (meaning the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure). (Buzan et al., 1998: 23)

This means that the promotion of certain values as underpinning a particular vision of international order through interdependence and inclusion is, for the EU, both a strength and a potential weakness. Strength, because it allows the organisation to reach beyond the boundaries of its member-states through the promotion of policies of inclusiveness that attract its neighbours towards a common vision of political order. Weakness, because this interdependence also means that instability in the neighbourhood becomes a threat for the organisation itself that the EU has to promptly respond to.

The promotion of cohesive governance structures then refers to the idea that the EU can be seen as promoting its idea of European order beyond its member states, by attracting non-member states through the so-called policies of inclusion, and by attempting at creating interdependence beyond its member states. This can be considered part of the historical evolution of the EU that has adapted to the drastic changes in the geopolitical scenario from a Cold War configuration of order, to a post-Cold War one. This, this thesis will unpack later in the empirical cases, is evident in the Georgian and Ukrainian situations.

## **2. Purpose of the study**

The main objective of the thesis is to provide a contribution to the debate on the EU's role in conflict resolution at the theoretical and empirical levels. **First**, on the theoretical level, the thesis aims to further developing a resource in IR that sees the EU as a normative and international actor in the field of conflict resolution. **Second**, the thesis sustains the idea that the Union should be treated as an international normative power. By highlighting the normative approach of the EU to conflict resolution, the thesis implicitly argues that the Union is not moved solely by its own interests, but also by the desire to spread liberal values and ideas at least within its borders and its neighbourhood. **Third**, and still on the theoretical level, the thesis aims to generate debate related to the non-invasive approach that the EU adopts when it gets involved as a third-party in ongoing conflicts. Because of the lack of a military, the thesis reveals that the EU is likely to be more trusted by the receiving party and, by virtue of this renewed legitimacy, is more able to persuade warring parties to abandon hostilities.

**Fourth**, on the empirical level, this thesis aims to compare two recent situations of the European Neighbourhood: Georgia and Ukraine. These cases have been selected in order to understand the strategies that the Union has put in place to ease the pacification of the conflicts, and how they were received in both countries. In both cases, the thesis focuses on the first 12 months of operations, considered fundamental

to understand the approach and initial reception of the Union's strategy in the two countries. **Fifth**, the thesis also aims to generate new comparative data that can be used more broadly to assess the efficacy of EU strategies in the domain of conflict resolution.

**Finally**, the thesis also aims to contribute towards policy formation within the organisation itself. By highlighting the complexities and difficulties faced by the EU in the interventions in Georgia and Ukraine, the thesis aims to provide indications that will highlight how the EU is often target of general discontent. While this obviously does not mean that the EU does not have its inconsistencies that undermine its coherence (both vertical and horizontal), the thesis sustains the idea that the Union suffers mainly from a perception crisis.

### **3. Research Questions**

In order to deliver on the purposes outlined above, the thesis follows a practical, overarching question that can be outlined as follows:

**How did the EU, as a coherent international normative actor, promote conflict resolution in Georgia and Ukraine?**

The theoretical bases to unpack conceptually this question are outlined in detail in Chapter 2, which is entirely dedicated to setting the theoretical frame for analysis. Generally speaking, this question is derived from three essential debates that concern the Union's foreign policy approach to conflict resolution. The first debate evolves



around the ontological nature of the organisation. Among the various perspectives advanced in the literature, this thesis argues that the EU should be considered as an international normative power. The second debate concerns the legitimacy of the EU in this domain, and essentially argues that the legitimacy of the EU derives firstly from its contractual nature, and secondly from its perceived coherence in hosting situations. The third debate locates the approach of the Union to conflict resolution, arguing that the Union promotes the creation of spaces of intersubjective dialogue among parties through formal structures (such as the EUAM and EUMM missions) and incentives. This approach differs greatly from means of coercive diplomacy and enriches the Union's contribution as a vital actor in conflict resolution.

However, the research question above stresses the importance of two aspects of the EU that require clarification: firstly, the EU's coherence and, secondly, its normative impetus. The research question, by providing a definition of the Organisation as a coherent normative actor, aims at highlighting certain preconditions for the effective delivery of foreign policy options in the field of conflict resolution.

Actually, the simple fact that the EU is founded upon a treaty among different states, questions about the coherence of the Organisation abounded since its very creation. As Christian Tietje outlined, the idea of coherence is one of the main constitutional values of the organisation. While issues remain on the wording in different languages of this concept, the idea is actually quite clear: to create an institution that, despite being composed of a vast heterogeneity of states and their visions towards international politics, is able to act in a consistent and systematic manner, through a single institutional framework. (Tietje, 1997: 232-233). Gauttier outlined the importance of coherence for the EU in the following terms

While the constitutional nature of this principle in the specific framework of the second pillar may be called into question, the whole 'coherence is at the heart of building the EU's constitutional identity' as a principle of action and organisation. In this respect, coherence may be viewed as a moderator in conflict over European construction and presents as such an avenue for attaining hypothetical balance between integration and cooperation. (Gauttier, 2004: 40-41)

While quintessential for the purpose of this dissertation, Maurizio Carbone highlighted the inherent complexities that are embedded in applying policy coherence as a concept to the EU institutional framework. He noted, firstly, that the principle of policy coherence often refers, in existing literature, to policy coherence within states, "in which two or more domestic policies may push in different directions". (Carbone, 2008: 325). Secondly, policy coherence is both a process and the outcome of a process, meaning that in the first instance it "implies the absence of incoherencies between and the mutual impairment of policies, [...] in the second case, the focus is on tools and mechanisms, often considered a pre-condition for achieving policy coherence". (Carbone, 2008: 326) Last, with a focus on goals, the same policy may be coherent from a trade perspective but incoherent from a development one. Box and Koulaimah-Gabriel (1999) noted that precisely because of this complexities that are inherent in the very definition of policy coherence, a certain degree of incoherence is to be expected in any true pluralistic system. However, because of the contractual nature of the EU and its institutional composition, incoherence in the formulation of foreign policies especially regarding its neighbourhood, is likely to reflect negatively on the credibility of the Organisation in the international arena. For Gauttier, incoherence is the main obstacle between the idea of the EU and its real manifestation. (Gauttier, 2004)

It seems clear that the notion of coherence is fundamentally linked to two other concepts that are crucial in understanding the EU's role in international politics, and its ability to deliver on its stated aims: consensus and effectiveness. Consensus has become a cornerstone of post-Cold War international politics, and can be defined as the explicit or implicit agreement among different actors in the international sphere on the norms and policies to promote to produce or maintain international order. (Rittberger, 1997: 10-11) In this light, the progressive proliferation of international organisations in the international arena, coupled with a disillusionment towards power politics, have greatly influenced the idea that international relations should be conducted on the basis of consensus and not forcible imposition of supposedly universal norms. (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 60-61) In this sense, according to Risse-Kappen, the idea of consensus underpins not only the preference for specific policies over others, but also legitimises international actors to act in certain ways. In fact, "the new consensus definition of international regimes emphasises not only explicit rules of international co-operative arrangements, but also that these rules gain 'prescriptive status', for example that actors regularly refer to the norms when commenting on their own behaviour and that of others." (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 67) For the EU this means that member-states have to agree on the norms to promote and on the tools to promote these norms in order for the Organisation to be efficient in the delivery of its stated aims.

So that coherence is instrumentally linked to consensus, and functionally linked to efficiency. In fact, for the purpose of this thesis and in light of what stated above, coherence is considered a pre-condition for efficiency. As noted by Daniel Thomas, the link between coherence and efficiency has been one of the cornerstones of analyses on the EU's ability to have an impact in the international arena. (Thomas, 2012: 458)

While several caveats exist in such analyses, it seems clear that for the EU to be able to exercise its power in international politics, coherence is one of the fundamental stepping stones. (Thomas, 2012: 473). Portela and Raube stress the fact that coherence in foreign policy formulations is especially crucial for the EU, because of the institutional composition of the Organisation that is essentially a voluntarist pooling of heterogeneous sovereignties. (Portela and Raube, 2012: 4). Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler clearly exposed the fact that a plurality of visions in foreign policy, coupled with the formulation of policies that contradict each other and offer different pathways to receiving actors, lies at the heart of inefficiency for the EU. (Niemann and Bretherton, 2013: 274-275) Historically, Juncos argued, the fact that the EU has not been perceived as a single coherent actor has undermined its international position, while hampering its ability to influence the outcome of security issues related to its Eastern neighbourhood. (Juncos, 2015: Chapter 1) This is just a cursory look that justifies the inclusion of coherence as one of the fundamental characteristics that this thesis posits as essential for an effective EU foreign policy formulation. It can be summarised in the idea that consensus is instrumental for coherence and coherence is functional for efficiency. The notion of coherence will be further articulated in the following chapters as being essentially composed by two dimensions: vertical and horizontal. Vertical to be understood as the coherence of goals between member states and the Organisation; horizontal to be understood as the formulation of non-contradictory policies at an institutional level. (see Chapter 2, section 3 of this thesis)

The second fundamental characteristic that this thesis assumes to be fundamental to analyse the role of the EU in Georgia and Ukraine relates to the normative dimension of the EU. In order to justify the inclusion of “normative” as a pillar for definition and analysis, it is useful to provide with a broad definition of norms. Audie Klotz, in 1999,

defined norms as standards of accepted behaviour. (Klotz, 1999) In international relations this assumes the trait of a set of principles that should be taken as guidelines for states to be able to discern an acceptable code of conduct, from a non-acceptable one. However, norms do not drop from the clouds. They are not transcendental values that all states inherently share and apply. One of the most adherent ways to conceptualise the evolution of norms in international politics has been provided by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink that outlined this evolution as happening in three distinct steps: Norm Emergence, Norm Cascade, and Norm Internalisation. (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 887-888). Emergence entails the appearance of a new norm in the international arena, often in contrast with pre-existing standards of accepted behaviour. Cascade implies the diffusion of stated norm across the international chessboard. Internalisation highlights the fact that a moment exists when states follow certain normative patterns in a natural manner, without acknowledging their constructed nature. Each of these steps is associated with specific actors. So that emergence is deeply related with the idea of norm-entrepreneurs, or those agents that aim at altering the normative fabric of international politics. Cascade is the moment in which other actors, or norm followers, accept the normative path outlined by the entrepreneur. And internalisation relates to all actors in the international sphere, until a new contrasting norm is promoted by other norm entrepreneurs. (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 890-893).

In this thesis the EU is treated as a normative entrepreneur that aims at promoting certain values and praxes in international politics. The historical and conceptual position that the EU holds in international politics, however, differentiates the Organisation from other norm-entrepreneurs, namely states. This is because the EU does not rely on its military force or its hierarchical position to promote stated norms,

but rather on its ability to persuade diplomatically other actors to follow its vision. (Smith, 2005:74) According to Menon, the EU can be considered as

a pioneer in long term interstate peace building, a pioneer actor through trial and error and thus designing options for peaceful governance. In this vision, the EU is one of the most formidable machines for managing differences peacefully ever invented. (Menon et al., 2004:11)

Sjursen links the notion of a normative EU to the idea of a promotion of an international legal standard, as a benchmark to defend the EU from accusations of imperialism and neo colonialism. (Sjursen, 2006:249) The revival of EU's centrality debate at the end of the Cold War largely contributed to the idea of the Organisation's benign power. Given the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the West no longer faced a united single enemy, the necessity of coercive measures to promote norms was deeply questioned. (Pace, 2007: 2) However, in order to claim that the EU is a truly normative power, one cannot limit the analysis of the Organisation within its own boundaries. The resurgence of nationalism, the re-emergence of terrorism, and the decline of the US, all hint at the fact that in order to assert itself as a normative power the EU needs to look beyond its boundaries, especially in the field of conflict resolution. To put it with Pace,

[r]ethinking EU normative power involves questioning the genuine extension of the democratic peace doctrine to conflict areas outside the EU's demarcated borders. It also requires asking why the construction of an external actor's power has often not worked in cases of conflict, like the Middle East, outside Europe. (Pace, 2007:21)

This is just a cursory overview of the normative debate that has surrounded the EU since its inception, done in order to justify the presence of the word "normative" in the

research question. It seems clear that the normative dimension of the EU stresses and is interlinked fundamentally with the ideas of coherence and consensus explained above. In many ways, both the normative and the coherence nexuses stress the idea of a fundamental relationship that exists on one level between the member-states and the EU. And on the other between the EU and non-member states. This relationship underpins the entire dissertation that focuses on one side on the ideational force of the EU, exercised through its foreign policy measures. And on the other on the reception of such an idea in the situations that hosted the Organisation's operations. However, it is also evident that this normative connotation of the EU leads to several potential debates that will be explored in the theoretical chapter. In particular, the chapter will focus on the distinction between values and interests, on the idea of normative goals, and on the establishment of a normative impact. However, including the normative dimension in the analysis of the EU's policies in Georgia and Ukraine constitutes a significant feature of this dissertation that considers the normative dimension of the EU one of the Organisation's most crucial innovations in the creation and administration of systems of power that are not necessarily based on coercive measures. As Nathalie Tocci stated, the EU's normative dimension is what makes it different from state-actors in international politics, and it is against this stated normative mission that the Organisation should be analysed and its operations assessed. (Tocci, 2008: 1-3)

The clarification on the inclusions of the coherence and normative ideas in the research questions leads necessarily to the unpacking of stated question in three different sub-questions that will aid in the analysis of the aforementioned dynamics.

These are:

- What have been the major structural incentives that the EU adopted in its foreign policy-making in relation to the Georgian and Ukrainian cases?
- How did the actors involved in the conflict respond to the EU's Policies?
- What were the major constraints to the EU's approach to conflict resolution in the two situations?

Again, also the sub-questions above are related to the theoretical discussion advanced in chapter 2. These essentially focus on three aspects to the EU's understanding of conflict resolution as a foreign policy area and its related strategies. These are: third party dialogue, or mediation, as unpacking the role (projected and perceived) of the Union in Georgia and Ukraine; reciprocity, entailing how the EU shaped the interests of conflicting parties in the two cases; interdependence, or how the EU put structures and incentives in place to discourage the continuation of the conflicts.

#### **4. Methodology: Comparative Case Study, Qualitative Content Analysis, and Elite Interviews**

Before venturing into the discussion that clarifies the theoretical standing of the thesis, and the concepts fundamental to conduct the analysis, it is necessary to outline the main methodological approaches that this thesis adopts, and the sources used for analysis. This section is thusly tasked with outlining a three-fold methodological approach that encompasses comparative case studies, qualitative content analysis, and elite interviewing. Furthermore, the section also discusses the data gathering process.



#### 4.1 *Comparative Case Studies*

The main objective of this thesis is to find answers through a comparative component, unfolding in two different moments: these aim to answer the research questions. In order to do so, the study involves a parallel analysis of two EU approaches to conflict situations: the deployment of a monitory mission in Georgia and an advisory mission in Ukraine. For this reason, the thesis adopts the methodology of comparative analysis. To begin with, Katzenstein and Kohli define comparative politics as having

a focus on analytical relationships among variables validated by social science, a focus that is modified by differences in the context in which we observe and measure these variables (Katzenstein and Kohli, 1995: 11-12).

Case studies are commonly used across the social sciences and are acknowledged as a rigorous research strategy in comparative analyses (Hartley, 2004: 323). Stake (2000: 435) supports this idea and goes even further by saying that case studies are ‘one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry,’ at the same time as conceding that ‘they are neither new nor essentially qualitative’. In any case, quoting one of the most prominent experts in case study research, Robert Yin, it can be said that ‘[u]sing case studies for research purposes remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavours’ (Yin, 2003a: 1, in Kohlbacher, 2006). For these reasons, comparative analysis among different case studies supports the development of methodological frameworks, within specific political contexts, that focus on similar analytical themes across different case studies (Steinmo and Tehlen, 1992: 1).

The integration between comparative analysis and IR theories has been a core pillar of IR analyses since the late 1990s (Checkel, 2007: 24; Risse-Kappen, 2004: 53-54). In

the words of Peter Katzenstein (1995:11), ‘there is a growing need to erase the barriers between comparative politics [...], international relations, and political theory’. Such methodologies allow for the identification of patterns of replicability that can emerge among the different case studies and can, as such, corroborate the generalisation of initial hypotheses. From this comparative perspective, in order to assess the status of the EU with regard to conflict resolution policies, this thesis focuses on the cases of Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) in its two empirical chapters. Further, it finally enlarges the spectrum of comparison of the cases mentioned above in Chapter 5 by including four factors in order to extend the examination of the implications and consequences of the actions observed in conflict resolution.

#### *4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis*

To enquire about the nature of each case study, and the relationships that exist between them, this thesis focuses on qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA broadly speaking belongs to the methodological family of content analysis. Content analysis has a long history in research, dating back to the 18th century in Scandinavia. (Rosengren 1981) Initially, researchers used content analysis as either a qualitative or quantitative method in their studies. (Berelson 1952) Titscher et al. contend that content analysis is “the longest established method of text analysis among the set of empirical methods of social investigation”. (Titscher et al. 2000: 55) Traditionally the term “referred only to those methods that concentrate on directly and clearly quantifiable aspects of text content, and as a rule on absolute and relative frequencies of words per text or surface unit”. (Titscher et al. 2000: 55) Later, the concept was

extended to include all those procedures which operate with categories, but which seek at least to quantify these categories by means of a frequency survey of classifications. (Titscher et al. 2000: 34) Conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design that aims at providing descriptive inferences related to a specific phenomenon. This type of design is usually appropriate to test existing theories (as is the case in this dissertation) or to modify such theories to new emergent conditions. For this reason content analysis generally avoids using preconceived categories (Kondracki, Wellman, and Amundson, 2002), instead allowing the categories and names for categories to flow from the data. Researchers tend to let new insights emerge organically from the data (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002), an approach that has also been described by Mayring as inductive category development. (Mayring, 2000)

Similarly, Schierer (2012), defined QCA as a rigorous technique to codify and summarize textual data, organized according to a coding frame that contains all dimensions of interest. Bryman already expanded upon this point by claiming that QCA is defined as

an approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analysed (and the categories derived from it) appeared. (Bryman 2004: 730)

QCA aims at understanding different dimensions and concepts within political texts. In doing so, the method allows to find meaningful contingencies between different parts of the corpus of the texts analysed. The growing popularity of QCA is intimately linked to the development of mass media and international politics and with the progressive incrementation of mass communication. (Mayring 2001: 114; Titscher et

al. 2000: 55) In fact the object of research for QCA content analysis can basically be any kind of recorded communication, such transcripts of interviews/discourses, official speeches, social media posts, video tapes, and in general all written documents. In this sense, according to Weber, QCA goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings.(Weber 1990) Bryman argued in favour of QCA by stating that qualitative content analysis is 'probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents', comprising a 'searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed'. (Bryman 2004, 732) In addition, qualitative content analysis aids the integration of quantitative methods for analysing texts and discourses. According to a multiplicity of authors, it is not through counting and measuring that "patterns" or "wholes" in texts can be demonstrated, but by showing the different possibilities of interpretation in relation to "multiple connotations" (Gläser and Laudel, 2004: 192; Titscher et al., 2000: 62; Kohlbacher, 2006). Authors such as Mayring even speak of the superficiality in quantitative methods that oversimplifies reality by distorting data. Precisely because of the aforementioned reasons, this research adopts a qualitative approach to content analysis. (Mayring 2001: 1) Nowadays political elites have a variety of forms of communication that necessarily influence the perception of specific actors in international politics.

This essentially means that in the relationship among different actors, like state and non-state actors, their ways of communicating one with the other is necessarily influenced by their institutional frameworks, their cultural backgrounds, their understanding of the other and of the situation in which they are, the tools that they use to communicate and more. In fact, the analysis proposed in this thesis involves a

focus on the contextual meaning of the text generally obtained from “narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as article, books, or manuals”. (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002) According to Hsieh and Shannon, this form of analysis goes beyond quantitative approaches to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study. (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1278) It is argued in fact that, while useful to identify macro-trends and macro-changes in overall narratives, quantitative analyses are limited by their deafness to local contexts and realities. In the sense that numerical calculations based on large-N samples of written texts tend to obscure the local imaginations that produce them. (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1280) This is why when analysing the approach and effectiveness of the EU in Georgia and Ukraine it is important to place strong emphasis on qualitative research, by stressing *inter alia* the various forms that a construction of a narrative entails.

Therefore, the analysis of discursive structures becomes quintessential for understanding the nature of the relationship as well as the perception that actors have one of the other. This means that the concepts that emerge from the analysis of documents, interviews, and official statements, might have different meaning if different actors are speaking about them. (Elo and Kyngas, 2008:112) So that the idea of “conflict resolution” might have one meaning for the EU and the Georgian and Ukrainian governments, potentially leading to frictions in the formulation and acceptance of specific policies to pacify the conflict. Furthermore, understanding the relationship that binds two or more actors in a single discursive framework means understanding the actors themselves, through the way in which they speak about a specific concept or event. (Dubois and Ford, 2015: 2068) This means that when analysing, for instance, EU narratives on the formulation of policies related to the

resolution of the two conflicts at hand, it is possible to identify the discrepancies that exist within the organisation in this domain. And by doing so, it is possible to explore the cohesiveness of the Union in this specific instance.

This, in turn, means that in order to thoroughly understand the influence of certain actors over others (for example, the EU in the resolution of the Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts) QCA becomes a vital tool for analysis. Through an analysis of texts, namely official statements, responses, and interviews, the thesis proposes to gather an understanding of the relationship that underpins the EU's involvement in Ukraine and Georgia. Because of the triangulation of data provided by different forms of communications (official documents, printed interviews, first hand interviews, media appearances and more), the thesis minimises issues of trustworthiness of qualitative data that tend to hamper the qualitative process. (Elo et al., 2014: 1-2) Following Elo et al. (2014), the thesis seeks to provide with a rich amount of qualitative data on the issues at hand, especially by integrating printed and official materials with elite interviews. The case for elite interviews is justified in detail in the section below.

The length of the texts under scrutiny largely depends on what the researcher attempts at finding, which means that certain segments are in the form of full paragraphs or even articles, while other only concerns portions of the text under examination. In this case, the thesis primary interest was on understanding the structures that the EU put in place through the EUAM and EUMM missions in Ukraine and Georgia, and how they were received within the two cases' political elites. Therefore, some segments are complete sentences expressed through official channels, social media, and interviews, while some others are a fragment of a sentence or a paragraph.

Broadly speaking, the idea of actors using a heterogeneous form of communication presents with several benefits for this thesis. First, it stresses the dialogical nature of the relationship between the EU and the governments that engage with the Organisation's approach in Georgia and Ukraine. This dialogical nature is not only one of the core institutional component of the EU, but also stresses one of the fundamental theoretical positions of the dissertation. In fact, liberal-institutionalism and specifically its mirroring in EU's operations, highlights the idea that unlike powerful-state actors the Organisation has to approach matters of conflict resolution through intersubjective dialogue. This means that a methodological focus on both ends of this relationship enriches the analysis by subsuming particular approaches to the conflicts under scrutiny to the broader context in which EU policies take place. By doing so, it is possible to gather knowledge not only on the conflict-phenomenon, but also on the rationale that moves actors to act in certain manners, and on the perception that actors have one of the other. So that, for instance, by analysing the response of the Georgian and Ukrainian governments to EU proposals for conflict resolution, it is possible to explore the perception that the governments have about the EU.

Second, the fact that different actors deploy different tools in their communication strategies also highlights the idea that in an ever-richer communication environment, it is not sufficient to rely on single-forms of communications to appreciate the intersubjective nature of the relationship that binds different actors in conflict resolution. Through an analysis of a heterogeneous corpus of documents integrated with first hand interviews, the thesis also aims at identifying potential points of dissonance between official and non-official narratives. This helps the thesis in mitigating the problematics related to institutional narratives that, according to Mumby (2009), are *de facto* limited in their potential expression by constraints that emerge because of the

role that institutions are expected to play in the international arena. This means that, for instance, by interviewing members of the EU this thesis seeks to understand the debates and intricacies that underpinned and eventually led to the formulation of certain policy prescriptions.

Last, a focus on the receiving ends of the narrative, namely the Georgian and Ukrainian governments, helps in understanding whether or not the approach of the EU to the conflicts under scrutiny has been perceived as legitimate. In fact, by strongly focusing on proposed policies and the responses to such propositions, the thesis aims at highlighting that in the current international arena the EU plays a normative role. However, by analysing the responses to such normative propositions, the thesis aims at understanding the different receptions to these propositions, and whether or not these are compatible with the local contexts in which they are proposed.

#### *4.3. Elite Interviews*

This research complements the aforementioned approach with a series of semi-structured interviews and comparative analysis. As noted by Tansey (2005: 5), elite interviewing is fundamental in political science because it ‘frequently involves the analysis of political developments at the highest level of government, and elite actors will thus often be critical sources of information about the political processes of interest’. Elite interviewing can help in unravelling the decision-making process at the highest level. Furthermore, it contributes to inferring about wider epistemological communities crucial in the decision-making process or as recipients of it. Moreover, it helps the reconstruction of an event or set of events (Tansey, 2005: 7).



The case for elite interviewing rests on four main reasons. First, the integration of elite interviewing with comparative cases helps to corroborate what other (usually written) sources have declared. Secondly, it helps to clarify what a specific political community (in this case, EU representatives) involved in the process thinks. Thirdly, it contributes by constructing inferences about wider political communities involved in the decision-making process or as recipients of that process (for example, Georgian and Ukrainian political elites). Finally, it provides justification for understanding and reconstructing an event or a set of events in the evolution of a political process. In this sense interviews can redress the distortions that exist in written sources typically associated with what actors can and cannot say publicly. However, it is also sometimes the case that interviewees misrepresent their own positions in ways that raise questions about the reliability of their statements, for a number of reasons. As a result of these potential limitations, it becomes necessary for the researcher to be aware of the possible drawbacks that come with conducting interviews and critically evaluate any interviews carried out in the research process.

#### *4.4 Data gathering*

The interview process relied on several interviews conducted by the author of this research with EU officials and civil servants in Brussels. In particular, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP), the European Council (EUC) and the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM). Also, the author, during a fieldwork trip in Kiev (Ukraine) has conducted a series of short interviews with Ukrainian and international journalists, NGOs and Ukrainian activists working (among several local recovery projects) with

children and war veterans. Additional interviews have taken place via Skype because, due to the nature of international organisations posts, some people are not based anymore in Tbilisi (Georgia) or Kiev (Ukraine) or Brussels. The interviewees agreed to take part to this research project but only if the actual content of the interviews would remain confidential. The author has found invaluable information from each and every person that kindly offered their time and knowledge, and, for these reasons, in the thesis names will not be mentioned. However, these interviews will not only pinpoint political and strategical considerations by key actors subject to the enquiry but, despite the inability to publish their full content, they constitute a priceless milestone for the understanding of the complexity of the debate on approaches to conflict resolution at the international level.

In terms of QCA this work refers to a set of primary and secondary archival sources that include UN, EU, NATO, and OSCE documents and resolutions, state narratives, and academic and opinion articles, all of which helped frame the debate on conflict resolution within these institutions. Furthermore, the thesis also takes the contribution of the media and social media into account, not only in shaping the terms of debate but also in influencing decision-making processes. This is naturally related to the part of the thesis that deals with the examination of those discursive structures explained above. All of these documents form the basis for understanding national and international attitudes and the actions of key actors involved in the processes of conflict resolution in Georgia and Ukraine.

It is worth noting that this thesis addresses the first 12 to 18 months of operations in both the situations under scrutiny. This is because the questions posed by the research essentially entail an understanding of the initial approach of the Union in matters of conflict resolution. Therefore, the identification of the structures put in place at the

beginning of the engagement in the two situations set the basis to understand: first, the initial instruments that the EU adopted to create spaces of intersubjective dialogue and the incentives that it proposed to hostile parties to achieve conflict resolution, and second to unpack the initial responses that these instruments received in the two contexts.

## **5. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is organised in five chapters: after this introduction, Chapter 2 sets the over-arching theoretical basis of the discussion, as well as highlighting the conceptual devices used in the analysis. To do so, it approaches and reviews the theoretical debates regarding the evolution of the EU as an actor in global politics. This is essentially carried out through the examination of three major theoretical debates: liberalism as a valuable approach to understand the European Union's position in the international sphere, the EU's legitimacy as an international normative power and its foreign policy dimension, and how the organisation approaches matters of conflict resolution.

After this, the thesis transitions from the theoretical discussion to a more empirical one in Chapter 3. The third Chapter focuses on understanding the EU's approach to the situation in Georgia, as well as assessing the fairness of the criticism aimed at the organisation in that context. The chapter provides the background to the Georgian conflict and assesses the strategies adopted by the Union in its first year of operations in the countries, and how they were received (and perceived) in the country. This chapter particularly addresses the structural incentives that the EU proposed to the Georgian government to promote conflict resolution, and, in particular, the EUMM mission and the content of the neighbourhood policy.

Chapter 4 conducts a similar analysis, that focuses on how the EU approached the Ukrainian crisis and whether or not it was able to create a space for intersubjective dialogue among conflicting parties. This Chapter focuses on the EUAM mission and if this helped in the construction of a dialogue to ease the hostilities among the parties involved in the crisis.

Chapter 5 concludes this thesis and articulates the comparison between the Georgian and Ukrainian case. The Chapter discusses the role of the EU in both conflicts, to understand if the incentives put in place through the EUMM and EUAM missions and the Neighbourhood policy influenced the decision making process of the parties involved in the conflict. Furthermore, the Chapter also discusses the theoretical points advanced in Chapter 2, to understand if the claims about the Union's actorness in foreign policy are corroborated or undermined by the EU's interventions in the two countries. The Chapter also offers some policy implications of the study.



## **Chapter Two – Theoretical Framework: the EU’s Normative Power between Liberalism, Foreign Policy, and Coherence**

### **1. Introduction**

This Chapter aims at outlining the main theoretical tenets of the thesis. The first section introduces Liberalism as the main theoretical, and over-arching, tool to inquire into the research questions. In this section the thesis argues that Liberalism is particularly suited to the current dissertation because of four main reasons. First, it provides an alternative to power-politics that is well suited to understand the structures, mechanisms, and goals of the EU’s approach to conflict resolution. Second, because this tradition emphasises the role of IOs in taming the violence arising from the anarchical nature of international politics in the post-1991 international architecture. Third, liberal-institutionalism also introduces the idea that rationality is something malleable, and in this sense IOs have the ability to alter rational decision making in conflict scenarios. Fourth, liberal-institutionalists argue that conflict resolution should rely more on incentives to alter the positions of warring parties rather than on military might. In this first section, the distinction between relative and absolute gains plays a core explanatory role in understanding how and under what conditions states decide to yield portions of their sovereignty to IOs such as the EU.

In the second part of the Chapter, the thesis offers a theoretical understanding of the EU’s role in international politics. This conceptualisation is relevant to understand not only the reasons why states might sustain EU efforts in conflict resolution, but especially to unpack how the Union can have an impact on states’ decision making. The discussion analyses the concept of legitimacy in IR as fundamental in the

argument that the EU has indeed the power to influence and constrain states' behaviour. The concept of legitimacy is then tied to different theoretical perspectives on the EU's approach to foreign policy-making that are derived from the "gradualist" and "sui generis" schools of thought. Gradualists believe that the creation of a single voice has always been present in the history of the Union; *sui generis* (for a better term) who believed that this has been an event intimately related to the end of the Cold War. In order to understand if this single actorness was achieved in Georgia and Ukraine, the second part of the chapter also introduces the notion of coherence (vertical and horizontal) as a conceptual tool to unpack the approaches of the EUAM and EUMM missions. Lastly, the second part of the chapter introduces the idea that the EU is essentially a normative power by outlining why the EU can be considered as such, what norms it aims at implementing, and why it matters for its approaches to foreign policy in the domain of conflict resolution.

The third part of the chapter is dedicated to understanding the EU's approach to conflict resolution. It focuses on mediation as an essential component to the Union's approach to the subject matter. Furthermore, it outlines that the EU's non-invasive approach to conflict resolution is intimately linked with the Union's normative dimension, as well as being coherent with the liberal-institutionalist paradigm. This section also outlines the EU's establishment of permanent political and military structures that should allow the Union to deliver on conflict resolution. Lastly, this part presents an alternative to the EU's approach to conflict resolution to reinforce the idea that the Union is essentially a normative power interested in promoting peace via non-military means.

## **2. Liberalism-institutionalism: Beyond Power Dynamics and the Role of International Organisations in International Politics**

This thesis is theoretically grounded in a liberal-institutionalist interpretation of international relations theory. Liberalism in IR, the theoretical lens in which liberal-institutionalism (also referred to as institutional liberalism or simply institutionalism) is subsumed, is largely derived from political theory, which posits the absolute importance of the freedom of the individual in socio-economic spheres. As postulated by Recchia, there exist four tenets of liberalism: first, that citizens possess judicial equality and certain freedoms (such as freedom of religion and press). Second, that governments derive their authority from a contract between sovereigns and citizens. Third, economic considerations should start from the recognition of private property. Fourth, economic decisions should be freed from excessive bureaucratic control. (Recchia, 2011, pg.1434)

As already noted, liberal-institutionalism is one of the derivations of Liberalism, as a political theory, in the domain of international relations. Recchia is correct in pointing out these four fundamental characteristics of liberal thought but, in IR, there is a tendency of legitimising theoretical positions through the identification of philosophical archetypes that provide with general theoretical tendencies. For liberalism in IR, these archetypes are essentially three: John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant. A cursory look into how their ideas helped in the shaping of liberal-institutionalism should provide this dissertation with a general philosophical and theoretical orientation in the construction of a theoretical framework. This section is not going to unpack liberalism as a political theory in full detail, but aims at investigating the core components that led to the formulation of



liberal-institutionalism as a theoretical lens to investigate international politics. These are: the focus on individual freedom, the contractual nature of political authority, and the preference for international frameworks to ensure long-lasting periods of peaceful coexistence.

The very name “Liberalism”, according to Maurice Cranston, emerged from a debate on the idea of Liberty. (Cranston, 1967:459) Liberal thinkers have traditionally postulated that in the state of nature humans are naturally free to order their actions, without having to accommodate for others’ Will and needs. (Locke, 1689: 287). The idea of freedom, later explored in “positive” and “negative” terms, is one of the fundamental nodes that have been translated into IR theory. Liberal thinkers in IR have in fact extensively focused in the identification of those international structures that would facilitate the free expression of the human being. Examples are abundant in this domain, but they generally rest on the idea that distributions of power and the international architecture through which power is distributed and exercised should be based on the respect of individual freedoms. So that those institutions that promote this freedom should be defended and exalted (Sobjerg, 2007:476), whereas those that restrain this exercise should be attacked and abandoned. (Yilmaz, 2016: 148)

This very basic, and normative, idealisation of liberty necessarily questions the legitimacy of political authority. In fact, if in a state of perfect nature humans are free, why should they be subjugated to any form of political authority? Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, in various forms, tried to solve this theoretical nexus. And they did so by stressing the contractual nature that binds citizens and the state and, in international politics, states and international regimes. (Hasenclever et al., 1997:21) Contractualism, therefore, holds a very specific meaning in the architecture of international politics. And this relates to the idea that states form treaties and

agreements on a voluntarist basis in the promotion of specific normative patterns. (Wenar, 2001: 80-81) This, on one side, aids the distribution of power across the international chessboard by ideally preventing the forceful imposition of powerful states' will. On the other, legitimises the organisations and regimes that result from the negotiations held at the international level. (Keohane, 1982: 326-327)

The last liberal tenet that this section explores is Kant's Third Definitive Article on Perpetual Peace. Immanuel Kant assumed that in order to promote peaceful coexistence among states at the international level the international community should long for the promotion and implementation of two ideas: democracy and supranationalism. (Kant, 1795) Both these ideas found a permeable discourse in the liberal discourse in international politics, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Kant argued that democracies hardly ever go to war one against the other. And, as such, the promotion of democracy should be the cornerstone for an international community that longed for peaceful coexistence. At the same time, Kant distrusted modern state institutions as being inherently power-driven and self-interested and, thusly, the creation of a supranational regulatory body that took the form of a confederation of free states constituted the pre-requisite for the manifestation of his Utopia. (Molloy, 2019:125).

While cursory, this overview of certain philosophical components of Political Liberalism is useful to identify those concepts that virtually compare all liberal thinkers that have attempted to model liberal theories as theoretical frameworks for studying international politics. (Moravcsik, 1996)

However, with the evolution of the discipline and the progressive specialisation that characterised IR scholarship, liberalism has assumed various forms and different articulations in different years. This thesis focuses on one of these articulations,

namely liberal-institutionalism. And it does so because, while it is clear that different variants of liberalism overlap and evolve around the core concepts outlined above, it pays specific attention to three ideas that can be closely linked with the rise in importance of the EU in international politics. First, it stresses the importance of non-state actors, and namely international organisations or institutions, in the formulation of normative fabrics that underpin inter-state relationships. Second, it assumes that these institutions, of which the EU is a prime example, facilitate cooperation among states by providing avenues to discuss and implement rules for the peaceful coexistence among states. Third, it postulates that these institutions help in the spread of values that create an interconnected and interrelated international arena, thusly minimising the space for violent conflicts typically associated with state-state relationships. These three tenets are discussed in the sections below.

To start with, according to Johnson and Heiss, the defining characteristic of liberal-institutionalism presumes “that domestic and international institutions play central roles in facilitating cooperation and peace between nation-states.” (Johnson and Heiss, 2018: 123) It seems to be accepted that Liberalism had a hard time making sense of the two global conflicts, while prospering in times of peace. Especially, the rise in importance of the EU, the crucial actor in this thesis, almost “redeemed” this school of thought. As Johnson and Heiss contend

Europe's incremental development of supranational governance made these [liberal] abstract ideas concrete. The path began in 1951 with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which would manage coal and steel production in France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. In 1967, the ECSC merged with two sister bodies to form the European Communities (EC). In 1973, the original six-state membership expanded to encompass

Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Throughout this process, numerous European policymakers expressed an Angell-like insistence on making their states so inter- dependent that war among them would never again be a compelling option. (Johnson and Heiss, 2018: 133)

The authors also stress the fact that in order to cope with realist critiques on basic liberal and functionalist tenets (namely the utopic dimension of classical liberalism and its supranational teleological afflatus), liberal-institutionalism gained progressive popularity among IR scholars. (Johnson and Heiss, 2018: 136) This view is reinforced by Thomas Risse-Kappen, who argued that it is precisely because of the growth of the EU, and its renewed interest in becoming a central-alternative actor in international politics, that liberal-institutionalism became a fundamental lens through which analyse international developments. (Risse-Kappen, 1995; Risse-Kappen, 1996: 58-59).

The common concepts outlined above formed the basis for the development of liberal-institutionalism and have been translated into a series of concepts that aim at reproducing liberal values in international politics. The basis for this translation is the idea that inter-state relationships necessarily have repercussions domestically. Ikenberry and Deudney ascribe three characteristics to the liberal-institutionalist vision of international politics that are at the core of this thesis:

First, international law and agreements are accompanied by international organisations to create an international system that goes significantly beyond one of just states. The archetypal example of such an organisation is the United Nations, which pools resources for common goals (such as ameliorating climate change), provides for near constant

diplomacy between enemies and friends alike and gives all member states a voice in the international community.

Second, the spread of free trade and capitalism through the efforts of powerful liberal states and international organisations like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank creates an open, market-based, international economic system. This situation is mutually beneficial as a high level of trade between states decreases conflict and makes war less likely, since war would disrupt or cancel the benefits (profits) of trade. States with extensive trade ties are therefore strongly incentivised to maintain peaceful relations. By this calculation, war is not profitable, but detrimental to the state.

The third element of the liberal international order is international norms. Liberal norms favour international cooperation, human rights, democracy and rule of law. When a state takes actions contrary to these norms, they are subject to various types of costs. However, international norms are often contested because of the wide variation in values around the globe. Nevertheless, there are costs for violating liberal norms. The costs can be direct and immediate. For example, the European Union placed an arms sale embargo on China following its violent suppression of pro-democracy protesters in 1989. The embargo continues to this day. The costs can also be less direct, but equally as significant. For example, favourable views of the United States decreased significantly around the world following the 2003 invasion of Iraq because the invasion was undertaken unilaterally (outside established United Nations rules) in a move that was widely deemed illegitimate.(Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999, pp. 180–181, emphasis added)

These three tenets are of particular value for this dissertation because they assert the centrality of IOs in international politics, the interconnectedness of states in the post-

1991 era which makes military conflict undesirable, and the necessity of spreading norms to tame states' behaviour. From these premises it is Liberalism, in its institutional variant has, historically, offered a compelling alternative to power-politics as the most valuable interpretative tool that has been established at the core of realist analyses.

Liberals offer four major lines of criticism towards this interpretation of international politics, which constitute the main reasons for being adopted by this thesis: **first**, the core assumption advanced by realists, that anarchy is a fundamental fact of international relations (Art and Jervis, 1985: 7) is, from a liberal viewpoint, nothing more than a partial truth. Liberals assert that power-relations exist, and they also agree (with the partial exception of John Ruggie, 1983: 261-265), that anarchy constitutes an important factor in IR. However, they also argue that systemic anarchy can be effectively tamed via norms and institutions that promote reciprocity and cooperation (Keohane, 1984: Chapters 4 and 5; Holsti, 2004: Chapter 1). It is precisely this emphasis on International Organisations (IOs) as vehicles to promote cooperation that makes liberalism a valuable tool for this thesis. The idea expressed here is that the EU can act as a tool to tame violence in international politics. In this sense, this thesis aims at validating the idea that IOs such as the EU do play a significant role in minimising (or pacifying) the violence that arises from the anarchical condition of international politics. This thesis doesn't however argue that the EU (or any other IO, in fact) can be considered as an over-arching authority that dictates states' behaviour. However, as better elucidated in the following sections, it postulates that these organisations can influence states' decisions on how to cope with violence by providing incentives and structures for states to prefer cooperation over power-struggles.

**Second**, liberals contend that the realist presumption that International Organisations (IOs) are less influential than state actors in international politics because they are non-unitary actors is largely a myth. They offer two kinds of explanations for this; the first is anti-argumentative, in that it challenges the foundations of the claim by arguing that even states cannot be reduced to single units wherein decisions are expressed through a single voice (Vasquez, 1998: 165-166; Keohane and Nye, 1974: 39-40). So that the abstraction process that lies at the basis of realist thinking, can also be applied to IOs. In addition, if one buys into the assumption that foreign policy has to be analysed ex-post, then even IOs such as the EU can be analysed under the frame of reference normally applied to state foreign policy (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 58-59). These two tenets give birth to the possibility of considering the EU as a unitary actor, as this thesis does. This is grounded in a dyadic proposition that either regard states' policies are being informed by a multiplicity of visions or that ex-post analyses of IOs policies can be unitary. Based on the existing literature, the concept of the EU as a unitary actor is indeed much contested. Nick Wright contended that it is beyond doubt that 'the EU has shown itself capable of sustained and coherent international action in some areas' (Wright, 2011: 10-11). Similarly, Michael Strange, while outlining the limitations of state-centric approaches to the analysis of the EU, highlighted some forms of coherent policy formulations, especially in the fields of economics and security (Strange, 2015). This thesis agrees with the argument presented by Barnett and Duvall (2004:163) that IOs can be understood as "two central components of global culture – rationalisation and liberalism". Rationalisation can be described as the process through which states patterns of action follow mean-ends calculations, and are structured around impersonal rules and procedures. If rationalisation provides IOs with their *raison d'être* and their formal structures, "liberal political ideas about the sanctity and

autonomy of the individual and about democracy as the most desirable and “just” form of government [...] have constituted their goals”. (Barnett and Duvall, 2004:164)

Furthermore, this thesis posits the idea of treating the EU as a unitary actor on a counter-argument, which is that if states can be treated as such actors, so can the EU. There is little doubt that state-centricity has been the main theoretical tool deployed in the IR literature so far. After all, the main schools of thought in the field all consider states as being the central unit of analysis of international politics, and this is valid for realism, liberalism, the English School, and constructivism alike (see, for instance, Waltz, 1967; Keohane, 1984; Bull, 1979; Wendt, 1992). Most scholars belonging to these traditions analyse international politics on the basis of states’ preferences and actions, implicitly arguing that they behave like individuals in the state of nature. This parallel with the state of nature produced the analytical effect of intrastate differences being marginalised in IR as a discursive tool. However, if one acknowledges the fact that even states are composed of a multiplicity of preferences in formulating coherent policies, then the criticism towards understanding the EU as a unitary actor dissolves, as argued by Simon Hix (Hix, 2005: 134-135). This means that, while considering states as unitary actors is a loose oversimplification of a state’s decision-making process, it serves an explanatory purpose. In a similar fashion, this thesis look at the EU as a unitary actor, following Tsebelis and Money (1997) and Scully and Ferrel (2003), but mainly for explanatory purposes. In this sense, the thesis does not argue against the strand of literature pointing to the differences within the EU as a considerable obstacle in considering the organisation as a fundamental actor in international politics (see Katz, 1999) but, for explanatory purposes, argues that, by treating it as one, its fallacies and qualities become more prominent because the analysis would not merely evolve around internal inconsistencies but also external



pressures. Naturally, there are also other reasons to consider the EU as a unitary actor. First, as Moravcsik noted, EU member states share a mandate of cooperation (Moravcsik, 2017). Second, even in the absence of formal regulations, EU members often formulate coherent policy options by forming “coalitions of the willing”, as happened in the recent efforts to control the migration crisis across the Mediterranean<sup>2</sup>. More fundamentally, perhaps, European countries do not posit a threat to one other, in addition to being economically interdependent. By following Kant’s propositions in Democratic Peace Theory, this constitutes one of the main reasons why EU members can act as one, a situation that differs starkly from other actors whose neighbouring policies are still largely based on military might, such as China and its neighbours (Moravcsik, 2017).

The above does not imply that this thesis argues that IOs are more important, or even equally important, than states. But it does contend that these organisations can play a role in shaping their behaviour by promoting cooperation through formal structures, such as the EU. Because of what has been said so far, it seems useful to define international organisations, to see if the EU meets the criteria for being analysed under such a lens. Krasner famously stated that international organisations are actors that embody shared norms, rules, and procedures that focus expectations regarding international behaviour. (Krasner, 1983). Principles and norms, therefore, “provide the normative framework for regimes, while rules and decision-making procedures provide more specific injunctions for appropriate behaviour”. (Martin and Simmons, 2012: 328) In this sense, an international institution is the coupling of the rules and norms that underpin its existence, and the organisation through which these norms

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, September 2018. Admittedly, this crisis has been quite challenging to manage, especially for the past five years. However, Southern European member states have had to accept being the first point of contact for migrants and refugees.

are discussed and promoted. (Martin and Simmons, 2012: 329) Buzan noted that nowadays the terms “institutions” and “organisations” are somehow interchangeable, but both nowadays refer to the broader framework that makes non-state actors focal points for discussion and implementation of the normative fabric of international politics. (Buzan, 2006)

Following these very famous distinctions, it can be said that an international organisation can be referred to as a formal institution of international politics, where actors debate about the norms that should regulate inter-state behaviour and the policy-patterns to promote stated norms. Furthermore, from Keohane (1982:326), it is possible to infer that such organisations need to be of contractual-voluntarist nature, where actors agree to become part of the dialogue. Given these three indicators, that are consistent with the liberal ideas that infuse liberal-institutionalism, the EU is treated here as an international organisation. While a debate exists on the inclusion of the EU in this category of international actors, discussed specifically in section 3 of the present Chapter, it seems plausible to assert that the Organisation does meet the fundamental criteria outlined by liberal-institutionalists. This, on the one hand further justifies the focus on liberal-institutionalism, on the other clarifies the distinction that exists between the EU and state-actors in the international arena.

The **third** reason why liberal-institutionalism is adopted in this thesis as the main theoretical reference is because liberal-institutionalist, following their classical predecessors, contend that rationality is not as fixed as realists posit. While keeping the idea that states are essentially utilitaristic and rationalistic actors, they assume that such these calculations can and should be shaped by the work of international organisations. (Keohane and Martin, 1995: 40-41) If, as Goldstein and Pevehouse contend, ‘realists are happy to assume that states desire power’ (Goldstein and

Pevehouse, 2006: 100), liberals contend that the focus of analysis should be on the formulation of these desire-preferences. This notion is derived from the philosophical archetype that liberals hold as significant in the development of liberalism as a school of thought, i.e. Jean Jacques Rousseau grounding his interpretation of the state of nature as being inherently influenced by the benign nature of human beings (Rousseau, 1767). This proposition has, as a corollary, the idea that competition in the international arena is far from being the natural state of things; on the contrary, it is the societal product of super-imposed preferences (Girard, 1977). As such, from a liberal perspective, IOs such as the EU can shape the course of international politics by changing the perception that states have regarding the formulation of their desires by arguing that the maximisation of power is not beneficial for order, as Kenneth Waltz (1967: 215-216) argued, but rather creates the presuppositions for conflict (Keohane, 1984: 199). This is relevant for this dissertation because it implies that the EU can influence policy-making by offering alternatives to power-desiring scenarios. This is particularly evident in the two missions in Georgia and Ukraine, analysed in Chapters 3 and 4, where the EU can be seen as offering incentives to promote conflict resolution.

**Lastly**, but most importantly, liberals and liberal-institutionalist alike question the use of power as a means for pacifying conflicts in international politics. Power, especially military power, is regarded, from a liberal perspective, as an extremely costly manner of influencing and shaping behaviour, when contrasted with means of diplomacy, peacekeeping, and other non-military strategies (Axelrod, 1984; 1997). This notion is particularly evident in the work of neoliberals, who applied a tenet developed in economic scholarship (i.e. Game Theory) as the basis for developing a sociological and theoretical model called “The Prisoner’s Dilemma” (Keohane, 1984; Powell, 1991). As concisely outlined by Andrew Moravcsik, the problem with these

exegetical explanations lies in the fact that preferences expressed through a coercive manifestation of power (as military means are) are highly costly and create tensions among the conflictual parties (Moravcsik, 2001: 8-9). This is of extreme importance when considering the EU as an actor in conflict resolution because, as already stated, the EU has not only historically prioritised diplomacy and bargaining over military might (Mahncke and Gstoebl, 2012: 21-25), but has also been forced to decentralise military operations and delegate their enforcement to member states, given the lack of an EU military force (Bretherton and Voegler, 2012: 27-28).

The theoretical relevance of this discussion can be synthesised in Keohane's famous formulation that 'the anarchic structure of world politics does mean, however, that the achievement of cooperation can depend neither on deference to hierarchical authority nor on centralized enforcement. On the contrary, if cooperation is to emerge, whatever produces it must be consistent with the principles of sovereignty and self-help' (1984: 1). In short, liberal-institutionalists argue that the link between the EU and conflict resolution rests on the idea that peace, in post-Cold War architecture, is likely to spring out from the ever-more importance of democracy among members of the Union, as well as because of the rise interdependence among European countries that makes war "unprofitable". (Pollack, 2001, p. 225) In reference to the two cases analysed in this dissertation, it is argued here that the EU has the ability to provide incentives for the Georgian and Ukrainian governments to prefer non-military actions for conflict resolution.

However, even the sub-category of liberal-institutionalist has seen progressive refinement of its approach to international politics. Worth of particular mention for this dissertation are two interpretations that have emerged as particularly concerned with explaining the role of the EU in international politics: functionalism (and neo-

functionalism) and inter-governmentalism. While sharing the theoretical groundings of liberal-institutionalism and having being incorporated as pieces of the liberal-institutionalist mosaic, these two theoretical leanings offer certain refinements that are useful to outline here. On the one hand functionalists “emphasise an incremental and gradual process of political change that is fundamentally driven by the logic of functional self-sustaining processes”. (Risse-Kappen, 1996:55)

Inter-governmentalists, on the other hand, follow the rationalist regime analysis and explain the role of the EU as the result of constant inter-state bargaining. (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 55) Because of its goals, this thesis argues that the EU ability to deliver on conflict resolution prospects is intimately linked with external constraints (such as being part of the European Neighbourhood) and internal developments (such as the hostility of certain parts of the Georgian and Ukrainian political elites towards the EU). As this thesis outlines later in this chapter, these two dimensions are also intimately connected with the EU’s actorness in foreign policy. For this reason, the thesis leans more towards the side of inter-governmentalism, privileging the role of local actors in the establishment of relationships with the EU. This is particularly evident in the following discussion on legitimacy and its sources. In this sense, the ability of the EU to influence processes of conflict resolution is conceptualised in this theoretical framework as pertaining to a two-level game, theorised for instance by Putnam and Evans. (Evans et al., 1993; Putnam, 1988) Applied to the situations in Georgia and Ukraine, the two-level game implies that the two governments have the ability to act as a link between the power-struggles that characterised internal politics of the two countries, and the objectives of the EU, formalised through the EUMM and EUAM missions.

From the sections above, it seems evident that theoretically what is necessary is to conceptualise if and how EUAM and EUMM impacted on domestic politics. Specifically, it is imperative for the current dissertation to understand what mechanisms are typically associated with the analysis of this alleged impact. Traditionally, the EU domestic impact is conceptualised in terms of the adoption, implementation, and internalisation of its rules. (Schimmelfennig, 2005, pp. 827–828) This thesis focuses on the first year of the EUAM and EUMM missions and, as such, is much more focused on the first two steps of the process advanced by Schimmelfennig.

While undoubtedly useful to incorporate in this thesis for the reasons explained above, liberalism and its institutionalist variant have not been short of critics. Some of these critical lines have already been pointed out when contrasting it with realism (pp.58-61 of the present Chapter). However, these critical lines are relevant for this thesis and can be succinctly summarised in the following three points. First, as Grieco posits, realists don't solely focus on relative gains, as liberal-institutionalists claim, but on the combination of relative and absolute gains. However, because of the positional nature of states, relative gains posit existential problem to be prioritised over absolute gains. (Waltz, 1988: 331) So, the first point of friction lies in the identification of those hierarchies of interests that shape inter-state politics. Here, for instance, Farrell argues that states' cooperation with the EU only happens when states' interests naturally coincide with the aims of the organisation, or if they can be projected through it. (Farrell, 2005:265-266) Second, Grieco argues, institutionalists refute the centrality of state-actors in international politics. (Grieco, 1988: 488) This creates a second critical problem for this thesis since it presumes that Organisations such as the EU can only have a marginal impact on the course of international politics. This

critique has been famously summarised by John Mearhseimer who argued that organisations only matter at the margins of international politics. (Mearsheimer, 1995: 7) Third, realists argue that states are unitary-rational agents sensitive to the costs of their actions, likely to be punished by the system if they pursue objectives beyond their means. (Waltz, 1965: 98-99) Translated, this is what led realists to claim that liberal-institutionalists were utopians, and that international system punished utopic thinkers. This is evident in Rynning's assessment of the EU's involvement in the power-politics domain through the CSDP that, he claims, has been hampered by the too idealistic behaviour of the organisation. (Rynning, 2010: 25) While many of the explanations justifying the choice for liberal-institutionalism already cover part of these critiques, and their responses, it is useful to think about their meaning for the role of the EU in international politics.

When talking about the preferential hierarchy for state-needs, the absolute-relative gains debate, institutionalists claimed that one of the great innovations of the EU is precisely to alter states' perceptions of their needs. This is the basis to understand the institutionalist approach to the management of international politics, as already outlined in the sections above. Specifically related to the EU, Leonardi pointed out that the Organisation offers incentives and pathways to inclusion that encourage states to shift from relative to absolute gains. (Leonardi, 1995: 66) This is particularly evident in the economic field, where an integrated market was introduced with the idea that cross-boundaries relations meant a facilitation of international business that would, eventually, benefit all. While the outcomes of such policies can be differently assessed, the fact that the EU has historically evolved to encompass more and more countries shows that the prioritisation of relative over absolute gains is not something that is not malleable. (Garcia, 2013: 21) This doesn't mean, naturally, that states forget about

their existential needs, but that in line with liberal-institutionalist tenets, the EU can accommodate national interests to international ones, as well as providing states with an institutional path to reconcile the two. (Krasner, 1983)

This point is closely related to the second critique that assumes the existence of an international system ready to punish those states that pursue interests beyond their reach. These assumptions imply the existence of an anarchical system almost unchangeable in its fundamental traits, where war is perceived as a looming constant threat to the very existence of states. However, as already noted, liberal-institutionalists claim that this is not necessarily the case. In fact, the underpinning anarchical condition of international politics that leads to the proliferation of worrying scenarios can be mitigated precisely through the instrumental use of IOs in the creation of an interdependence that makes war unprofitable. (Moravcsik, 2017) It is interesting to note that several authors used the creation of a long-lasting European peace after the Cold War to justify such a claim. MacMillan, for instance, claimed that the promotion of Democratic Peace through international institutions has been one of the core tenets in the historical process that defined and delineated the boundaries of contemporary Europe. (MacMillan, 2004: 200) On similar lines, Moravcsik outlined how the EU embodied the Kantian dream of a perpetual peace precisely because of its ability to alter the context in which war would normally proliferate. (Moravcsik, 1996: 124) Doyle goes even further, by claiming that the globalisation process, accelerated by the creation of multiple IOs, has created a web of interests in which the zero-sum game that rests at the core of realist thinking no longer applied. (Doyle, 2000: 83) The crucial contention here, to oppose to realist critiques, would be that notions of relative versus absolute gains are necessarily shaped by the environment in which states as rational actors calculate the benefits of specific policies. In an international



environment underpinned by war and distrust, prioritisation of self-interests is the norm. However, in contexts of long-lasting peace, as Europe after the Cold War, the friction between relative and absolute gains is minimised, and the potential collimation of the two becomes possible.

The third critique, or the idea that institutionalists refute the realist idea of states as unitary-rational actors, is theoretically mitigated by what has been said in the sections above. Or, that it is not a rejection of the idea that rationality moves states to act in certain manners, but that rationality is not a fixed unchangeable concept. (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2006: 100) This means that rational calculations are subject to the times in which they are made and to the actors making them. This idea underpins both the claims made above about gains and the institutional ability to alter the perception on those gains. In other terms, by creating an environment more fertile for cooperation, and by providing states with frameworks to develop rules for the pursuit of absolute gains, the EU fundamentally alters ideas of what constitutes a rational path of behaviour. As outlined by Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel, “in situations of interdependent choice (joint determination of outcomes), actors will of necessity behave strategically (that is, taking into account the expected actions of others)”. (Jupille et al, 2003: 11) Schimmelfenning goes even further by claiming that the main strength of the EU has been to interlock the strategic interests of states with the idea of a community in which the prosperity of all means the prosperity of every single actor in it. (Schimmelfenning, 2003: 159)

The last fundamental critique moved to this paradigm relates to the normative underpinnings of the EU, and this will be discussed in detail in the following section. Naturally, the discussion so far doesn't pretend to solve a debate that has been ongoing for the last, at least, thirty years. But it is used to locate liberal-institutionalism within

a broader discussion in IR, while justifying the preference granted to this theoretical proposition. As often happens, theories tend to be continuously evolving and the debate is hardly ever settled. But by providing with a through discussion on the main focal points of liberal-institutionalism, and its critiques, this thesis aims at claiming that this school of thought is relevant to the case studies to be examined in the following chapters.

### **3. The Actorness of the EU in Foreign Policy: Legitimacy, Coherence, and Normative Power**

The first section of this Chapter focused on the outline of liberalism as a main theoretical tool for this dissertation, the conceptual implications derived from this, and how they can be associated with the EU as an actor in international politics. This section, on the other hand, focuses on three aspects of the Union in the international sphere that lie at the heart of the analysis presented in this thesis: legitimacy, coherence, and normative power. These three dimensions underpin this thesis' understanding of the EU's actorness in international politics and its approaches to conflict resolution.

The concept and operational modes of legitimacy in international politics have been widely debated since the emergence of the discipline. As noted by Patrick and Forman, two characteristics are generally ascribed to legitimacy: "first, that legitimacy is a subjective condition, a product of one's perceptions; second, that legitimacy matters." (Patrick and Forman, 2002, p. 47) Legitimacy, broadly speaking, refers to the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed (Beetham, 1991). This recognition derives from the broadly accepted idea that international politics is shaped by a tacit agreement that actors share in the international sphere. (Chapman, 2009, p. 735) As already noted, the lack of a super-state authority requires states and other actors (such as the EU) to agree on the rules that influence inter-state behaviour. It is in this sense that the concept of legitimacy is intertwined with authority. In this thesis authority is treated as the ability of one actor, in this case the EU through the EUAM and EUMM, to "deploy discursive and institutional resources in order to get other actors to defer judgement to them". (Lincoln, 1994) Therefore,

legitimacy is the normative argument that many institutions invoke in search of authority. According to Beetham “authority is legitimate when it is acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules and with evidence on consent”. (Patrick and Forman, 2002: 48) As Barnett and Duvall clarified, “[t]he exercise of authority in reasonable and normatively acceptable ways bolsters [an institution’s] legitimacy. Conversely, it is because we believe in the legitimacy of authorities that we often follow their directives and think those directives are right and necessary, even when we do not like them”. (Barnett and Duvall, 2004: 170) In short, if an institution like the EU is involved on specific aspects of international politics such as conflict resolution, it has to be perceived as having the right of doing so. The origins of such a configuration are generally traced to the Westphalian era, in which, as Kennedy states:

Scholars are particularly insistent that their discipline began in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia closing the Thirty Years’ War. The originality of 1648 is important to the discipline, for it situates [the discipline] as a rational philosophy, handmaiden of statehood, the cultural heir to religious principle. As part of the effort to sustain this image, public international law historians have consistently treated earlier work as immature and incomplete—significant only as a precursor for what followed. Before 1648 were facts, politics, religion, in some tellings a ‘chaotic void’ slowly filled by sovereign states. Thereafter, after the establishment of peace, after the ‘rise of states,’ after the collapse of ‘religious universalism’, after the chaos of war, came law—as philosophy, as idea, as word. (Kennedy, 1988)

After 1648 sovereignty became the basic rule for state relationships and, as such, it became vital to understand when and why states yielded portions of their sovereignty to IOs such as the EU. And this is particularly evident in the increasingly interdependent configuration of international politics that characterised the post-1991

era. (Barkin and Cronin, 1994, p. 191) In many ways, this is a process of decentralised sovereignty in which the once only legitimate actor, the state, rationally decides to abide to rules that *de facto* limit its exercise of sovereign statehood. The reasons why states do this are multiple, but broadly speaking it can be said that “states create and delegate to IOs because they provide essential functions. [Such as] public goods, collective information, establish credible commitments, monitor agreements, and generally help states overcome problems associated with collective action and enhance individual and collective welfare”. (Barnett and Duvall, 2004: 161) As Hurd notes “[t]he operative process in legitimation [or in gaining legitimacy] is the internalization by the actor of an external standard” (Hurd, 2002: 388) This thesis will discuss the impact of this process since when it started at the end of the Cold War in order to get an understanding of EU actorness in the following sections. However, the notion of decentralising sovereignty has to come to terms to one of the core notions of IR theory: self-interest. In fact, when an actor in international politics is presented with a choice between two options, in most cases, it is going to pick the one that is more beneficial to its own survival. This means that when dealing with IOs, states are likely to cooperate only if they perceive the cost-benefit calculation involved in the transaction as leaning to the latter. In other terms, an actor internalises external rules, laws, and procedures, when it feels that its own interests do not conflict with the interests of a source outside itself. As put by Hurd, “[a]ctors who are interested act rationally to pursue goals” but adds “we know nothing a priori about what those goals are”. (Hurd, 2002, p.386)

Having said this, legitimacy is something that is extremely hard to measure. In order to inquire into the EU’s legitimacy in Georgia and Ukraine, this thesis argues that there are two essential ways to assert whether the EUAM and EUMM missions were

legitimate. **First**, the thesis looks into *rates of compliance*. Answering this question highlights information about the traction of the rule or of its agents (in this case the EU), and it may be that high rates of compliance constitute evidence for the legitimacy of the rule and the institution associated with it. **Second**, the thesis will query about the reasons for compliance and in-compliance with the rulings of the EUAM and EUMM missions in Georgia and Ukraine. As for inquiring into reasons for compliance, this is likely to give insights on the goals that certain actors share with the institution under scrutiny. Or, in other words, it might highlight why the Georgian and Ukrainian governments decided to accept the EUAM and EUMM missions, and why they followed their prescriptions. A similar reasoning goes for non-compliance, which might assert the reasons why certain groups within these two domestic contexts opposed the missions – as well as indicating what repercussions they had on their performance.

As already noted in the previous section, these formulations and their complexities have been unpacked in liberal-institutionalist terms through the distinction between relative gains and absolute gains. Absolute gains refer to a general increase in welfare for all parties concerned – everyone benefits to some degree, though not necessarily equally. Liberal-institutionalist absolute and relative gains are not in contradiction one with the other. Relative gains, which traditionally relate to realist views of international politics, describe a condition where states calculate their welfare in relation to other states and, for this reason, are generally unwilling to share portions of their sovereignty with other subjects. Liberal-institutionalists, on the other hand, forecast a world where states cooperate in agreements posited a general increase in prosperity for all, through IOs. To put it in Powell's words "the problem of absolute and relative gains divides neoliberal institutionalism and structural realism. The

former assumes that states are primarily concerned with absolute gains while the latter assumes that states are primarily concerned with relative gains” (Powell, 1991, p. 1316). For this thesis, it is important then to acknowledge that the EU doesn’t act in a coercive manner, putting states in the dilemma of abandoning their interests, but rather influences the formation of specific interests that are not mutually exclusive among different subjects.

But this is not a one-way transaction in which states influence the creation and operation of IOs. In contingency with the liberal paradigm, this thesis argues and, actually, investigates how IOs shape state-behaviour, conceded that they are perceived as legitimate. In fact, a wide body of literature exists and suggests that IOs do in fact have the power to affect the decision of states, and this literature highlights the role of legitimacy in the process. (Chapman, 2009; Drezner, 2000) In this thesis, legitimacy is understood, following Ian Hurd, as being a subjective quality, relational between actor and institution and defined by the actor's perception of the institution (Hurd, 1999: 381). On this, Zuern and Stephen argued that international institutions have to justify their interventions, especially on humanitarian grounds, on the basis of the collective good that they are tasked to deliver (Zuern and Stephen, in Suzuki, 2008: 45). When they fail to do so, according to Schaffer, ‘legitimacy crises arise [because] citizens distrust international institutions to the extent that they can no longer provide the collective goods for which they were set up’ (Schaffer, 2014: 7). But to theoretically frame the ways in which the EU can be perceived as legitimate and, in turn, shape states’ interests through its foreign-policy making efforts it is necessary to briefly refer to the notion of perception in international politics.

In fact, the notion of perception is fundamentally connected to legitimacy, and fundamental to understand the reception of EU foreign policies in domestic countries.

Arthur Stein notes that “if actors behave purposively given the information available to them – the information that actors possess about others – can be a critical determinant of behaviour. At times, therefore, perception, and hence misperception, can provide for the particular choice between cooperation and conflict”. (Stein, 1990: 55) On similar lines, Jervis has convincingly argued that the ability of an actor to effectively communicate its strategies and convince others of their benefits is a fundamental trait especially for actors that lack military might. (Jervis, 2017, Chapter 1) This vision is also somehow reinforced by Finnemore and Sikkink’s understanding of how norms develop in international politics (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 891-892). As such, in line with the liberal-institutionalist paradigm, communication is essential for the EU to generate shared values and therefore shaping rational-choice processes in situations of conflict. This is particularly relevant for the scope of this thesis because it implies that the ability of the EU to interact with warring parties in Georgia and Ukraine through the EUAM and EUMM missions is a crucial determinant for the legitimacy of the Union and, in turn, influence the outcome of these missions. In this sense, the structures and incentives provided by the Neighbourhood policy and the two missions are crucial determinants in shaping the interests of the actors involved in the conflict. This thesis will inquire into how much the EU has succeeded in creating a positive perception in this domain. So far, the section has described how the EU can be perceived as legitimate in countries hosting its foreign policies. But what is the Union’s understanding of foreign policy?

The EU approach to foreign policy-making represents a crucial dilemma embedded within the architecture of liberalism. The dilemma arises from the idea that the EU represents an institutional organisation with foreign policy aspirations in a world dominated by states. As highlighted by Hadfield, the paradox of this unique condition



is “its mandate to blend traditional foreign policy content with a rather unique form of common foreign policy making”. (Hadfield, 2006: 677)

Academic approaches to the EU foreign policy making seem to identify the “gradualists” as those who claim that “the functionalist qualities at the heart of EU project suggest that the ability to conduct foreign policy was integral to the peace-laden aims of post-war economic reconstruction and development” (Hadfield, 2006: 679–680) Gradualists believe that the creation of an EU single foreign policy strategy had its roots in the very inception of the Union and, albeit some bumps on the road, had constantly been the overarching goal of the member states that initially funded the Union. (Salmon, 2005: 360–361) This allows this school of thought to historically locate different policies that the EU has adopted through the years in light of the under-stated goal of an organisation that could eventually transcend traditional accounts of sovereign statehood. (Tonra and Christiansen, 2004: Chapter 1) In short, gradualists believe that the creation of a sort of supranational entity that combined different sovereign statehoods and enabled the EU to act as a single voice in foreign policy making has always been at the core of the EU as a project and has “evolved in linear (if uneven) fashion from an early commitment to post-Westphalian policy form within Europe to a truly ‘multi-perspectival polity’ that has restructured both traditional structures of power and the manner in which that power is distributed within foreign policy”. (Hadfield, 2006: 680)

On the other hand, the “sui generis school” argued in favour of the fact that the EU single-actorness in foreign policy is a recent development linked with the post-1991 era. The changes to the international system after the end of the Cold War required the EU to transform “into a unit capable of dealing both coherently and robustly with other actors.” (Hadfield, 2006: 681) This school of thought broadly argues that

external pressures and internal mobilisation contingent with specific historical moments, in this case the collapse of the Soviet Union, required the EU to re-think its role as an international actor. (Wunderlich, 2012: 655) An increasingly globalised world, where EU member states had to face threats that could not be addressed by single members, almost forced the EU to move from pure inter-governmentalism, in the words of Patten, to seek to establish a true common voice. (Hettne, 2003) Furthermore, sovereign lines that were up to 1991 defined by nation-states, had been enlarged to encompass broader interconnected regions and, in this climate, the EU had to project its renewed identity which was different from a mere aggregation of nation-states. (Söderbaum and Sbragia, 2010: 563–564) Broadly speaking, according to Niemann and Bretherton “while it is quite clear that the EU currently does not fit the standard idea of statehood, some (few) scholars are convinced that the *sui generis* character of the Union refers only to its present stage, which is to develop further towards a European federation”. (Niemann and Bretherton, 2013: 263–264)

This thesis does not inquire into the origins of a united foreign policy approach by the EU but borrows both from gradualists and proponents of the “*sui generis*” approach the idea that the EU can and should act as a single voice in matters of foreign policy. The two cases investigated in the dissertation will show that the EU did so in Georgia and Ukraine by providing structures and incentives for opposing subjects to come to peaceful terms.

However, acting as a single voice requires also a brief clarification on the idea of coherence that, as stated by Carrapico and Barrinha, “has long been a topic of policy and academic discussion, reflecting the positioning of this concept at the heart of the construction of the European project”. (Carrapico and Barrinha, 2017: 1255) According to Missiroli the issue of coherence for EU foreign policy came about in the

late spring of 2000, when Chris Patten, European Commissioner for External Relations, declared that “mere intergovernmentalism is a recipe for weakness and mediocrity: for a European foreign policy of the lowest common denominator”. (Missiroli, 2001: 177) Patten’s remark signals that the problem of coherence is brought about the multi-level nature of the EU. In fact, the Union is constituted by a multiplicity of layers of institutions and procedures. This complexity becomes particularly evident in foreign policy, that has traditionally been divided into two channels of policy making: the supranational one that primarily refers to the European Commissions on matters of trade, development, and humanitarian aid; and the inter-governmental one that refers to the Council and encompasses the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). With these kinds of complexities in place, in order to assert itself as a credible international actor, the EU has to ensure that its policies: **first** do not contradict one the other; and **second** are shared by the majority of its member states. As stated by “coherence emerges thus as an obligation for all actors in European foreign policy to coordinate their policies to produce coherent outputs” (Portela and Raube, 2011: 6)

Broadly speaking coherence can be defined as the absence of contradiction between policies and has been a crucial concern in foreign policy making especially linked with federal states. (Di Francesco, 2001; Stengel and Weller, 2010) Following Kohler, coherence is defined here as “a principle that guides foreign policy. In the case of the Union contradicting results are likely to arise from the inherent internal complexities of a multi-layered organisation that has to accommodate the different interests and bureaucracies of its members. (Smith, 2003) Nation-states, by virtue of their centralised nature can easily formulate foreign policies that are coherent with the current leadership and can be implemented through a centralised executive power.

The EU, on the other hand, constantly seeks to bargain its foreign policy strategies with its members as well as coordinating different policies that are often implemented simultaneously. So, to refine the concept, in the case of the EU, coherence indicates, on the one hand, the degree of congruence between the external policies of the Member States and that of the EU (vertical direction) while, on the other hand, it refers to the level of internal coordination of EU policies (horizontal direction).” (Koheler, 2010: 58)

The idea of what in literature is defined as vertical coherence can be recognised in the analysis of has been succinctly described in the Commission’s Communication on “Europe in the World” as follows:

“First and foremost, political agreement among Member States on the goals [is] to be achieved through the EU. This requires a strong partnership between the EU institutions and a clear focus on a limited number of strategic priorities where Europe can make the difference, rather than dispersing efforts across the board. This is the condition sine qua non [...] For the EU, there is the additional challenge in ensuring coherence between EU and national actions” (European Commission 2006: 5-6).

Similarly, member states to the EU are also required to “support the Union’s external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity”, and to “work together to enhance and develop their mutual political solidarity”. (Article 11(2) of the TEU). More specifically, article 24(3) reiterates that

The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and

shall comply with the Union's action in this area. The Member States shall work together to enhance and develop their mutual political solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations. (Article 24(3) of the TEU)

Horizontal coherence, on the other hand, has been historically deeply embedded in EU funding treaties. For instance, Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union states that the Union “shall in particular ensure the consistency of its external activities as a whole in the context of its external relations, security, economic and development policies” (Article C of the Treaty on European Union). This implies that the EU different approaches to foreign policy making should work in contingency, or at least not contradict one another. As posited by Gauttier, “the concept of horizontal coherence, or inter-pillar coherence, appears to be consubstantial with the external action of the EC/EU: it can be defined as the absence of contradictions between the policies of the European Community and the Common Foreign and Security Policy, or CFSP (consistency) on the one hand, and the achievement of a synergy between these policies (coherence) on the other hand.” (Gauttier, 2004: 24)

So for the scope of this thesis vertical and horizontal coherence imply a recognition that the foreign policy adopted by the EU through the EUAM and EUMM has not conflicted with other EU policies in the zone (horizontal coherence) and reflects mutual understandings from the majority of its member states (vertical coherence). The analysis of the two missions in relation to the neighbourhood policy will reveal that, at least in these two scenarios, the EU has indeed acted as a coherent actor.

So far the Chapter has discussed notions of legitimacy and the EU, the approach of the Union to foreign policy-making, and what kinds of coherence matter in the formulation of these approaches. However, what remains to be discussed is what kind of policies the EU formulates in relation to conflict resolution. This is, in turn, a question on the nature of the organisation. This thesis argues that the EU is an international normative actor and, as such, its external policies in terms of conflict resolutions are normative and value-driven in their essence. As noted by Youngs “writings on EU external relations have come (arguably, most) commonly to suggest that traditional pictures of rationalist bargaining between discordant national interests fail to capture the accumulation of a more normative, value-driven foreign policy profile”. (Youngs, 2004: 416) According to Sjursen, the normative approach offers a fruitful avenue of research because it moves beyond the impasse derived from traditional approaches that simply question the existence of a common EU foreign policy. (Sjursen, 2006: 236) The core crux of understanding the EU as a normative power lies in the fact that the EU has yet to achieve a united military organisation compared to nation-states or other IOs such as NATO. This creates an operational problem for the Union in formulating external foreign policies in the domain of conflict resolution because such policies cannot rely on extant military might. According to Manners: ‘the central component of normative power Europe is that the EU exists as being different to pre-existing political forms, and that this particular difference predisposes it to act in a normative way’ (Manners, 2002: 242) This is further corroborated by Sjursen who claimed that “the lack of military instruments is often mentioned as important to the EU’s ‘normative’ power.” (Sjursen, 2006: 238)

The debate about the normative afflatus of the EU has already been introduced in the first Chapter of this thesis. However, this debate has been indeed pervading IR scholarship since the creation of the Union. According to Manners, the idea of a normative Europe was written as a “statement of what is believed to be good about the EU; a statement which needed to be made in order to stimulate and reflect on what the EU *should* be doing”. (Manners, 2006: 168) Julie Kristeva noted that this was an effort to imagine an organisation capable of reconciling human differences under conditions of globalisation. (Kristeva, 2000) In relation to this, Thomas Diez has argued that “normative power is a power that is able to shape conceptions of the normal”. (Diez, 2005: 614) This claim is perfectly located within the philosophical horizon typical of liberal-institutionalism that, from Kant, derived the idea that human beings, and states by extension, have the ability to alter the reality in which they live when they perceive it to be unjust. (Kant, 1789) At the same time, this contrasts sharply as already noticed with the passivists inclinations of realism, that assume that structures in international politics, and specifically anarchy, naturally shape states’ decision-making process. Diez further claimed that in order to assess the normative power of the EU, one should think about what norms the EU promotes and how they are promoted. (Diez, 2005: 616) In this sense, it is useful to recollect what has already been said about the evolution of norms in international politics, and especially that this thesis assumes that to promote certain values (such as democracy and peace) by acting as a normative entrepreneur. As contended by Michelle pace, the normative underpinnings of EU policies “can be understood as institutional articulations of the principles EU actors uphold which include rule of law, good governance, democracy, human rights, order and justice”. (Pace, 2007:1045)

However, while these values do lean towards universalists conceptions of rights and duties to be replicated in the international sphere, the idea that a Western international organisation was tasked with the promotion of specific values traditionally associated with the West has raised more than one doubt. Federica Bicchì, for instance, stressed that the term normative (used in contingency with civilising) held unreflexive and eurocentric connotations. (Bicchì, 2006: 287) This critique is not without historical foundations. In fact, in international politics, civilising powers have often been criticised for shielding self-interests beyond ideologically motivated humanitarian discourses. Sjørnsen summarised this, and blames the EU for being culturally biased in the promotion of its own values across the spectrum of the international arena. (Sjørnsen, 2006: 238) But the critiques to the idea of a normative Europe are not limited to the long-standing idea of a Western-centric idealisation of values and rights that every state should accept unreflexively. Adrian Hyde-Price in fact argued that EU foreign policy has been idealised as a communitarian effort *de facto* obscuring the fact that the most powerful member-states dictate it for their own interests. (Hyde-Price, 2006: 222) On a similar vein, Tom Casier argued that the presentation of the discrepancies between the EU and Russia as a normative friction does little in highlighting the fact that competition over material resources is what really shapes the contours of this problematic relationship. (Casier, 2013: 1380-1381) It should bear no surprise that these critiques tend to come from the realist camp, given the conceptual differences between realism and liberal-institutionalism outlined in the section above.

While it is not denied that these critiques help in shaping the debate about the underpinning motives and praxes that shape the EU as an actor in international politics, there are certain theoretical responses that liberal-institutionalists opposed.



First, as Manners rightly points out, member-states of the EU have consistently led the path towards the creation of international legal systems that aimed at protecting the entirety of the international community. (Manners, 2006: 173) Such actions rest on the idea that the EU is different from other actors because it doesn't base its policies on assumed conceptions of exceptionalism. In Manners words

It is the lack of exceptionalism, rather than the claim to being special, which characterises most of the normative claims in the EU – particularly those located in past European failures and crimes (such as colonialism, nationalism, world wars, the holocaust and inequality). Generally implicit in any EU claims to being *sui generis* are built on humility for historical failures such as injustice, intolerance, and inhumanity. (Manners, 2006: 174)

This means that unlike other allegedly normative projects, the EU, by the very fact of being composed by a multiplicity of voices, cannot claim to promote values that only belong to the Union.

This leads to the postulation of a second response, specifically to the idea of promotion of relativistic values assumed to be universal. As already stated previously, the EU's composition derives from notions of contractualism typical of liberal thinking. This is what makes the EU different from states when they purportedly act on normative bases. Follesdal claims that this is a central component of the EU's ability to alter the reality in which it operates because, on one side gives legitimacy to the Union, and on the other puts pressure on member-states to act in conformity of the contract that they signed when they became voluntary members of the organisation. (Follesdal, 1998: 233)

Intimately linked with the idea of contractualism is the notion of perception. In other terms, according to Larsen, given the lack of military might capable of imposing certain values across the international arena, the EU has to be perceived as legitimate to act. (Larsen, 2014: 897) And the Union can achieve this only through the promotion of norms and values that are inclusive and not exclusive, through policies that stress the importance of the nexus between local agents and the EU. (Bicchi, 2006: 288-290)

In other terms, the lack of an instrument of coercive diplomacy opened up prospects for alternative pathways to peacebuilding that, as already noted, focus more on the creation of intersubjective spaces for dialogue combined with incentives and structures that ideally function as conflict prevention mechanisms and lie at the basis of de-escalation strategies. In this sense, Menon et al. argued that the EU is: “a pioneer in long term interstate peace building, a pioneer actor through trial and error and thus designing options for peaceful governance. In this vision, the EU is one of the most formidable machines for managing differences peacefully ever invented.” (Menon et al. 2004: 11) Theoretically this is also consistent with the liberal-institutionalist dictats outlined in the first section of this Chapter, which rely on an understanding of peacebuilding to be achieved through non-military and non-violent means.

Karen Smith also refers to these dynamics to understand the EU’s role in international politics by claiming that ‘the EU still clearly prefers positive civilian to coercive military measures’ (Smith 2000; 2003: 111). Combined with these structural constraints, the notion of a European culture that prefers a non-invasive approach is also fundamental. In fact, by only focusing on the lack of a military force, one could argue that if the EU

was to have one, it would prefer more traditional military approaches to conflict resolution. However, through an analysis of the European Security Strategy (ESS) Sjursen clarified that even in the face of new threats and new prospects for military engagement, the ESS seems to continue the tradition of 'civilian power' in the sense that it argues not only that the 'new threats' are not purely military, as they were considered to be during the Cold War, but also that most of them cannot be tackled by military means. Economic instruments are stressed as important to ensure reconstruction and so is civilian crisis management. Trade and development policies are highlighted as powerful tools to promote reform and ensure stability. And assistance programmes, conditionality and targeted trade measures are underlined as important elements in the European Security Strategy. (Sjursen, 2006: 238)

Understanding the EU as a normative power requires the assumption that the EU's external policies are not solely derived from a desire to promote its own interests, but must be seen as moved also by a certain understanding of what 'ought' to be done (Whitman 1998; Aggestam 2004). This view is supported by widespread analyses in many domains of EU foreign policy action. For instance, in the field of securitisation Ole Waever stated that the creation of a European identity was fundamental to the Union's foreign policy goals. (Waever, 1996: 127). Similarly Howarth claimed that the normative essence of the EU funding treaties means that citizens are more likely to support costly and risky interventions carried out as EU operations, in defence of European values, than in the case of NATO-labelled operations. (Howarth, 2001: 782)

However, while this narrative has focused on the lack military instruments for almost two decades, it is important to underline how recently there have been several changes and developments in the security environment. In fact, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) for Foreign and Security Policy (FSP) has started a process of closer cooperation in

security and defence while the Member States have agreed to step up the EU's work in this area and acknowledged the need for enhanced coordination, increased investment and more cooperation in developing defence capabilities. This is the main aim of the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO), as explained in Articles 42(6) and 46 as well as in Protocol 10 of the Treaty on EU. PESCO allows the Member States to increase their effectiveness in addressing security challenges and advancing towards further integrating and strengthening defence cooperation within the EU framework<sup>3</sup>. (EEAS, 2019) As declared in December 2017 by High Representative/ Vice-President Federica Mogherini

“We have activated a Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence – ambitious and inclusive. 25 Member States have committed to join forces on a regular basis, to do things together, spend together, invest together, buy together, act together. The possibilities of the Permanent Structured Cooperation are immense”. (Mogherini, 2017)

The main difference between PESCO and other forms of cooperation is the legally binding nature of the commitments undertaken by the participating Member States. The decision to participate has been taken voluntarily by each participating Member State, and decision-making will remain in the hands of the participating Member

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<sup>3</sup> PESCO is definitely going to be an improvement towards the actual participation of the member states in the foreign policy activities of the EU because it sets out more binding common commitments in the areas of defence investment, capability development and operational readiness. Each participating Member State is required to communicate every year a National Implementation Plan (NIP), informing the other participating Member States about the progress made on the binding commitments it has undertaken. Participating Member States submit their NIP every year, in line with the Recommendation on the Roadmap adopted by the Council on 6 March 2018. The NIPs form the basis of the assessment process, as described in the Council decision establishing PESCO. The High Representative then presents an annual report on PESCO to the Council. Based on an assessment done by the PESCO secretariat, the High Representative has to present the annual PESCO report to the Council in spring. On this basis, the Council will review annually whether the participating Member States continue to fulfil the more binding commitments. (EEAS, 2019)

States in the Council<sup>4</sup>. While this is an important development to understand the structuration of norms, and specifically security related norms, within the EU framework, PESCO is not analytically assessed in this thesis. This is due to the timeframe that is here under scrutiny. In fact, as explained in Chapter 1, the focus of investigation lies in the first 12-18 months of the missions' activities.

So it seems that the EU because of its normative foundations enjoys some privileges precluded to other actors in international politics. Having said that, it has already been noted in the introduction that the conceptualisation of norms has been subject to widespread debate in IR. From Richard Morris' assumption that '[n]orms are generally accepted, sanctioned prescriptions for, or prohibitions against, others' behaviour, belief, or feeling' (Morris, 1956: 611) to Williams' idea that '[n]orms [...] are rules of conduct; they specify what should and should not be done by various actors' (Williams, 1968: 12) the debate is still ongoing. Having said that, as already noted, there seems to be a general agreement on the definition (that this thesis shares) of norms as 'standards of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity'. (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 891) The norms that the EU embodies at attempts to project have been already discussed in the first part of this Chapter, and are essentially underpinned by those liberal value that emphasise the importance of peaceful relationship for the economic and political prosperity of the European zone. (Schimmelfennig, 2001: 48–49)

These responses to the critiques of the EU as a normative power are, however, not taken as axiomatic assumptions in this dissertation. In fact, because of the very nature of the questions posed, this thesis examines precisely the nature of the policies that

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with European Council and EEAS staff, September 2018

the EU has attempted to promote in Georgia and Ukraine, whether or not they were contractually agreed upon by its member states, whether they were inclusive, and how the Union has been perceived by local governments. In many ways then, the thesis aims at investigating precisely the different standpoints that scholars have adopted in their assessment of the EU as a normative power. This is to say that this the idea of the EU as a normative power has been rightly subject to rigorous scrutiny given its potential pitfalls. Such pitfalls recall, on one side, historical connotations of imperialism disguised as humanitarianism typical of Western approaches to international politics. On the other, they question the ideological presumption that the EU acts as an actor not solely influenced by its members' interests and desires. It is vital to keep questioning and researching these areas, because it is only through an analysis of the EU's normative power in application that it would be possible to defend the organisation from such attacks.

So that understanding the EU as a normative power sheds light both on the goals and the means of the EUAM and EUMM missions. As for goals, the prospect of prolonged conflicts in the neighbourhood casts a grim light on the peaceful conduction of international relations. As for means, the EU's normative stance implies an attempt to solve these conflicts via non-violent means. Therefore, it will be shown how the two missions analysed in this thesis seem to support the view that the EU relied on its normative power to engage in the Georgian and Ukrainian situations to promote its values. In fact, the structure provided through the Neighbourhood policy and the non-invasive approach of the EUAM and EUMM missions demonstrate that the EU has approached these two situations in a normative manner. In this sense, at least with reference to the two cases presented here, the EU is treated as a normative international actor.

#### **4. Conflict Resolution, Hybrid Wars and the EU**

So far this Chapter has outlined the overarching theoretical paradigm that guides the dissertation, liberalism, as well as outlining the three fundamental characteristics of this thesis' understanding of the EU's role in international politics. This section looks at conflict resolution as a specific area of foreign policy-making that is essential to analyse the situations in Georgia and Ukraine where the EU was involved as an international normative actor.

Wallensteen describes 'Conflict resolution' as "a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other"(Wallensteen, 2002: 8). The term is intimately linked with the idea of peacebuilding, generally referred to as the product of long-term processes aimed at establishing the conditions for peace (Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 1999). Of particular interest for the scope of this dissertation, because intimately linked with liberal diktats and the EU approach to conflict resolution, is the idea of mediation. According to Bercovitch, mediation is a form of third party intervention involving "various forms of assistance and facilitation, short of judicial or coercive steps, designed to help the parties reach an acceptable outcome" (Bercovitch 1991: 3). Ayres outlines that mediation can come in different forms and can include a range of activities, including "facilitating communication, creating parity, suggesting options and providing resources" (Ayres 1997: 432) Lake and Rotschild highlight that such measures are of specific importance for those conflicts that have racial, ethnic, and nationalistic components, as is the case for the Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts. (Lake and Rothschild, 1996: 57)

This interpretation of conflict resolution is well suited to understand the EU's approach to the subject matter. As already noted, liberals tend to highlight the capacity of the EU to create a European political dimension in which hostilities can be peacefully accommodated. (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003) Liberal thought in IR is centred on the idea that explanations based entirely on power-dynamics are largely insufficient for providing insights into the current state of international affairs. As concisely outlined by Andrew Moravcsik, the problem with these exegetical explanations lies in the fact that preferences expressed through a coercive manifestation of power (as military means are) are highly costly and create tensions among the conflictual parties (Moravcsik, 2001: 8-9). This is of extreme importance when considering the EU as an actor in conflict resolution because, as already stated, the EU has not only historically prioritised diplomacy and bargaining over military might (Mahncke and Gstöhl, 2012: 21-25), but has also been forced to decentralise military operations and delegate their enforcement to member states, given the lack of an EU military force, that recalls the discussion on the EU's normative power above. (Bretherton and Voegler, 2012: 27-28).

Scholarship has extensively focused on understanding whether this phenomenon is natural (Waltz, 1967) or constructed (Wendt, 1999), positive (Mearsheimer, 1999) or negative (Keohane, 1982), limitable (Gaddis, 1992) or illimitable. It has to be noted that the two conflictual situations analysed in this dissertation, Georgia and Ukraine, are of very peculiar nature and can be described as "hybrid wars". The concept of hybrid warfare emerged from the 2000s "New Wars Theory" that emphasised a distinction between intra and interstate conflicts. In her 2013's "In Defence of New Wars", Kaldor identifies post-Clausewitzian conflicts as characterised by a shift



- 1) from those who waged war from ‘regular armed forces of states’ to ‘a varying combination of networks of state and non-state actors’;
- 2) in the goals, where ‘old wars were fought for geo-political interests or for ideology’ and ‘new wars fought in the name of identity’; and
- 3) in the methods, where military means were the predominant way to capture territory, while, in new wars, this is achieved by political means (Kaldor, 2013: 1-3).

In the context of the New Wars’ revolution in IR, Fulvio Attinà identified three dimensions of conflict that could encompass both old and new wars in a single conceptualisation: a certain number of fatalities, the presence of a military dimension, a threat to the dimension of democracy, and territorial proximity (Attinà, 2012: 1-2).

Such definitions of new wars have been recently further defined to better grasp recent Russian foreign policy military strategies in the proximity of the European Neighbourhood. These theoretical refinements have led the path to the emergence of the idea of “hybrid wars”.

Descriptively Glenn argues that a hybrid war is characterised by any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a tailored mix of conventional, irregular, terrorism and criminal means or activities in the operational battlespace. Rather than a single entity, a hybrid threat or challenger may be comprised of a combination of state and non-state actors. (Glenn, 2009)

Galeotti unpacks this definition even more by asserting that the distinctiveness appears not so much in essence, but in degree. States always tend to assert the primacy of the political, even while in practice they often get bogged down in the cruder metrics

of war – casualty ratios, how far the front line is moved, how many raids have been launched – or emotional red lines and matters of honour. (Galeotti, 2016: 291)

From such broad classifications of hybrid warfare, it is possible to further identify the fundamental characteristics of such a phenomenon in Kudors terms, who claims that a hybrid war is a conflict executed by either state and/or non-state threats that employs multiple modes of warfare to include conventional capabilities, irregular tactics, and criminal disorder. (Kudors, 2015: 1) Policy-makers also reacted to the emergence of these new threats. For instance, in 2010, the NATO Military Working Group accepted a definition of hybrid conflict elaborated in the following terms: “a hybrid threat is one posed by any current or potential adversary, including state, non-state and terrorists, with the ability, whether demonstrated or likely, to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively, in pursuit of their objectives.” From the Russian perspective Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff and allegedly the ideator of the foreign policy strategy that evolves around hybrid wars, defined them as encompassing the following elements:

- Military action is started during peacetime (without declaring war);
- Non-contact clashes between highly manoeuvrable specialised groups of combatants;
- Annihilation of the enemy’s military and economic power by quick and precise strikes on strategic military and civilian infrastructure;
- Massive use of high-precision weapons and special operations, robotics, and technologically new weapons;
- Use of armed civilians;

- Simultaneous strikes on the enemy's units and facilities throughout all of its territory;
- Simultaneous battles on land, air, sea, and in the information space;
- Use of asymmetrical and indirect methods;
- Management of combatants in a unified information system. (Erol, 2015: 262-263)

On one side, it is clear from the words of Russian President Vladimir Putin that the so-called Gerasimov's Doctrine, of which hybrid warfare is an articulation, is becoming one of the key cornerstones of Russian foreign policy especially regarding EU countries. (Renz, 2016: 284) On the other, questions about the novelty of the phenomenon, the perception of hybrid threats on European soil, their potential consequences, and who and how they should be dealt with still remain open in academic scholarship and policy-makers' circles.

On this, it is worth noting that while apparently overstating the newness of the concept (Popescu, 2015: 1), there is a growing consensus among scholars and policy makers that hybrid warfare challenges the idea of a European order in multiple manners. (Popsecu, 2015; Renz, 2016; Freedman, 2014; Gressel, 2019) These threats relate to three Russian aims in its neighbourhood, which make peaceful coexistence with the EU and its potential new-members problematic: first "Russia is claiming the exclusive right to operate in its neighbouring countries in order to deny some former Soviet republics the right to pursue their own foreign policy; [second] the Russian government is prepared to resort to (clandestine) military means to interfere in other countries, claiming that expatriates are under threat; [third] the Russian government

is willing to turn a blind eye on violations of international law committed by other international players in exchange for the same treatment of its ambitious regional plans”. (Erol, 2015: 2)

It seems evident from the conceptualisations above that hybrid wars constitute a real challenge for the international arena and for the EU specifically. In particular, they pose a threat to the possibility of future enlargements which, as been noted in the theoretical section above, constitutes one of the instruments that the Organisation can adopt in its norms’ promotion strategies. On this, as noted by Popescu, “it still appears highly unlikely that Russia will attempt to start seizing chunks of NATO members’ territory with “little green men”. But attempts to destabilise governments and embarrass both the EU and NATO through low-scale operations – what some call ‘poking and probing’ – are not in- conceivable.” (Popescu, 2015: 2) But is the EU apt to respond to such threats? It seems that the characteristics of hybrid wars demand for responses that go well-beyond the exercise of military power.

Many scholars, in fact, claim that coercive and military means do not constitute a valid approach to the resolution of these phenomena, but in fact exacerbate them. (for example, Boll, 2019) This is mainly because, on the specifics of the cases examined in this thesis, engaging in open confrontation with Russia on these issues would necessarily open the European battlefield once more, as well as providing only with a passive-reactive form of conflict resolution. (Freedman, 2014: 13) So in order to respond effectively to the emergence of this new aggressive foreign policy, actors should deploy a “dual track” approach: on one side, reaffirming their military cooperation to deter hybrid warfare initiatives; on the other engaging in open dialogue with unfriendly neighbours. (Gressel, 2019: 1) The first leg of this track has already manifested multiple times when NATO and EU members discussed joint military

responses to the emergence of hybrid warfare. These discussions built on previous instances of cooperation that bound the two organisations in the creation of an international order. NATO published a memorandum clearly stating that

NATO and the EU already cooperate closely in the cyber domain, including with exercises, and by sharing real-time warnings on cyber threats. NATO and EU countries have also taken steps to better defend against hybrid warfare, including by establishing the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, focused on how to counter tactics like cyber-attacks and propaganda. The Deputy Secretary General called the Centre a real boost for cooperation between the EU and NATO, as hybrid activities have become a permanent feature of Europe's security environment. (NATO, 2019)

However, and related to the second leg of the track, there are some fundamental traits of the EU that make the Organisation as uniquely important in the response to such manifestations of warfare. In fact, if what has been said so far about the role of the EU as a normative, dialogical entity proves to be correct, then the Organisation can be ideally located to respond to the emergence of this new kind of warfare. To put it in Popescu's words

the very nature of the threat requires a wider array of tools: well-trained police forces, functioning border management systems, and effective anti-corruption agencies, as well as transparency in the energy sector and in party political funding. It is here that the Union can make a real difference in contributing to a combined and integrated response. (Popescu, 2015: 2)

From the sections above, it seems possible to overall conceptualise the EU approach to the creation of peace through means of conflict resolution as focused on means of

reciprocity and interdependence, which embody a social process of mutual understanding that contributes to the creation of peace, as well as the prioritisation of communitarian elements over individualistic ones (Fukuyama, 2011; Giddens, 1985; Tilly, 1990). This is the conviction advanced in this thesis, i.e. that peace needs to be understood as mutually constituted by the actors involved in its establishment. (Noll, 2013: 1; Rinehart, 1989: 1-2) While these are general characteristics of the Organisation, there are also specific articulations of power and unique organisational structures that make the EU a suitable responder to hybrid warfare. These need to be always assessed against the idea that hybrid wars require responses that can't be based purely on military might but need to encompass a variety of dialogical approaches (including but not limited to diplomacy, ceasefires, intelligence, cooperation with allies, information sharing, and the creation of safe-spaces for inter-state dialogue).

Natalie Tocci reinforces this view and states that:

[t]he Union promotes conflict resolution principally through its 'constructive engagement' with conflict parties (Commission, 2001b, pp. 8–9). By constructive engagement EU actors mean the use of a rich variety of measures of co-operation, which are normally specified in and deployed through contractual agreements with third countries. These contractual relations take different forms, foreseeing different degrees of integration into and co-operation with the EU. (Tocci, 2008: 877–878)

The EU has four different aims concerning conflict resolution. The first one is conflict prevention, in which the organisation is committed to prevent the incompatibility of positions of different subjects to escalate in open violence. The second aim is conflict transformation, which means altering the degree of incompatibility between different positions. The third aim is international conflict management. Being one of the external actors involved in conflicts, the EU has the possibility to offer incentives to

contain the escalation of violence and create pathways for settlement. The fourth aim is to mediate internationally the positions of the opposing sides of the conflict to achieve a new, federal, status. (Coppieters, 2007)

The EU has often reiterated its commitment in the pursuit of peace in the European Neighbourhood. (Commission, 2004, p. 3; European Council, 2003). The importance of peace and conflict resolution in EU funding treaties is quite apparent. Some examples of this are the Maastricht treaty that stresses the necessity of “reinforcing the European identity and its independence in order to promote peace’. (Treaty of Maastricht, 4). The Treaty of Amsterdam, echoed the provisions of Maastricht (Treaty of Maastricht, 12-13) maintaining that the EU, unlike the UN, could not be subdued to great power politics. Another example of this is the treaty of Nice that still maintains that cooperation should serve as a central factor for conflict resolution. Lastly, the Treaty of Lisbon states that

In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among people (Art.2, Treaty of Lisbon)

Furthermore, Art. 7a clarifies that the basis for peace should be constituted by establishing :

[...]a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation (Art 7a, Treaty of Lisbon)

This pursuit often involves conflict resolution and transformation, conflict management and settlement (Pia and Diez, 2007). In line with the liberal tradition outlined in this chapter, EU actors have often indicated how human rights, democracy, the rule of law and regional co-operation – are essential elements in the construction of peace (Galtung, 1996; Commission, 2003; European Council, 2003; Kronenberger and Wouters, 2005).

In order to enable the European Union to assume its responsibilities and improve a coherent planning for conflict resolution, the European Council (2000) decided to develop the establishment of permanent political and military structures. In the Lisbon Treaty framework, all of these Common Defence and Security Policy (CSDP) elements have been integrated in the European External Action Service (EEAS).

- *The Political and Security Committee (PSC)* can be described as a preparatory body for the Council of the EU. Its main functions are keeping track of the international situation and helping to define policies. It prepares a coherent EU response to a crisis deciding on the mandate of each mission and exercises its political control and strategic direction.
- *The European Union Military Committee (EUMC)* is the highest military body set up within the Council. It is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of the Member States. The EUMC provides the PSC with advice and recommendations on all military matters within the EU. Together with the EUMC, the PSC is advised by a Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM). This committee provides information, drafts recommendations, and discusses the



opinions with the PSC on civilian aspects at every stage of the planning process of crisis management.

- *The Crisis Management and Planning Directorate* (CMPD) contributes to the objectives of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and a more secure international environment by the political-strategic planning of CSDP civilian missions and military operations, ensuring coherence and effectiveness of those actions as part of the European comprehensive approach to crisis management and developing CSDP partnerships, policies and capabilities.
- *The European Union Military Staff* (EUMS - working under the direction of the EUMC and under the authority of the HR-VP of the EEAS) represents the military expertise component of the EEAS's Comprehensive Approach. The EUMS coordinates the military instrument, with particular attention on collective military operations and missions, military support and the creation of military capability. Enabling activity supporting these initiatives includes: early warning, situation assessment, strategic planning, concept development, training and education, and support of partnerships through military relationships.
- *The Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability* (CPCC), which is part of the EEAS, is the permanent structure responsible for an autonomous operational conduct of civilian CSDP operations. Under the political control and strategic direction of the Political and Security Committee and the overall authority of the High Representative, the CPCC ensures the effective planning and conduct of civilian CSDP crisis management operations, as well as the proper

implementation of all mission-related tasks. The CPCC Director is responsible for all the civilian missions and is the bridge linking all the heads of missions.

Following this, conflict resolution, as understood in relation to the EU, can be defined as “the effort to reach accommodation between parties in conflict through interactive processes that lead to reconciling tensions, redefining interests, or finding common ground” (Stern & Druckman, 2000, pg. 5). The basic premise is that the EU has treated the Neighbourhood process as a structural prevention mechanism, using it to obtain a first layer of legitimacy, and by providing incentives to influence the goals of conflicting parties. To this end, the success of the EU in conflict resolution heavily rests on the idea that the organisation has helped in changing the position of the warring parties. (Diez et al., 2006)

Moreover, Diez et al. (2006) argue in favour of four ‘pathways’ through which the EU can reduce conflicts. The pathways that this thesis is going to investigate are the “enabling impact”, in which the institutional context of the EU can indirectly alter the approach of subjects involved in the conflict, and the constructive impact, which affects the subject positions involved in a conflict through ‘changing the underlying identity scripts of conflicts, thus supporting a (re-)construction of identities that permanently sustains peaceful relations between conflict parties’ (Diez et al. 2006).

In chapters 3 and 4, the thesis outlines why the Russian involvement in Georgia and Crimea can be considered as a manifestation of these hybrid dynamics that have their roots in the Gerasimov doctrine. It will be shown how the characteristics of the Doctrine, while embryonic, already emerged in 2008. And it is precisely because of

this security environment that it is imperative for the EU to further develop those characteristics that define the Organisation as a unique actor in international politics.

However, as already noted, there is another potential approach to the establishment of peace. Especially in recent times, it would be naïve to assume the EU's approach is the only available one. In fact, there is a strand of thought arguing that conflict resolution could be a transactional process between active states with altruistic orientations and passive receivers, often through means of force. This approach is labelled here as “forcible peace”. The belief that an elitarian club existed with the right to exercise force in the promotion of peace because of a portrayed moral superiority was an attempt to transcend the UN's role as a legitimiser of interventions in the late 1990s (Butros-Ghali, 1992). This understanding of peace is informed by the so-called “Weinberger-Powell” concept, which postulates that ‘relentless and overwhelming force is needed to deny opportunities for the escalation of conflicts’ (Kaldor, 1999: 128–129). This forcible understanding of peace, as already noted, is typical of those states that, because of their great power and status, enjoy special rights in international politics. One only has to think of the role of the US in promoting the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) interventions in the Balkans (1990s), Obama's “leading from behind” strategy in Libya (2011), and Trump's most recent decision to bomb Syria (2017). These approaches focused, according to those who promoted them, on displaying military might in order to pacify situations (Obama, 2011; Cameron, 2013; Trump, 2017). The situation is hardly different on the Russian front, where Russia intervened in regions at the periphery of the former Soviet Union and even at the borders of the EU. These operations, located mainly in the north and south Caucasus, sought to justify repeated interventions on the basis of solving

ongoing conflicts (Putin, 2004; 2013; 2017). Forcible peace, unlike relational peace, is grounded in military might and a prioritisation of individualism over communitarianism. The point to make here is not about whether the intentions behind these forceful interventions were genuine or not, but rather to remark that, the EU has a starkly different approach. And, as noted in the sections above, the politics and operationalisations of hybrid warfare seem to respond poorly to military approaches to conflict resolution. This is why hybrid warfare is an important factor when elaborating on the crucial points of this thesis. It is not argued here that the EU's approach, organisational structures, and underpinning norms constitute a panacea to solve all conflicts. There might be instances in which the dialogical approach of the EU and its focus on diplomacy over military might proves to be unprofitable. But in line with the tenets of liberal-institutionalism, it has to be assumed that the context in which conflict resolution policies take place matters, as do matter the actors involved in it. For the reasons explained above, that will be unpacked in the empirical chapters of the dissertation, it seems that ideally the EU can play a crucial role in the fight against hybrid wars and their deterrence.

## **5. Conclusions**

This chapter has provided with the theoretical perspective to understand the approach to the questions of the dissertation, and their analyses. It has done so by presenting the liberal-institutionalist paradigm as the core theoretical element to understand the EU's role in international politics and its approaches to foreign policy especially in the domain of conflict resolution. The first part of the chapter has focused on the

justification for the adoption of this paradigm, arguing essentially that it provides with an alternative to power-explanations that sit unwell with the EU's organisation and aspirations. In the second section the chapter has outlined this thesis' understanding of the EU's actorness in international politics and the Union's approach to foreign policy, focusing especially on its legitimacy, its coherence, and its normative dimension. In the last part the chapter has linked the concept of conflict resolution to the EU, via an understanding of the former through the lens of non-military approaches to peacebuilding. This part also conceptualised hybrid wars, as founded on the Gerasimov doctrine, as a threat for European Order. A threat, it has been argued, that the EU is prepared to deal with precisely because of its normative-dialogical stance. This signals that the EU is consistent with liberal approaches to the solution of conflicts and prefers the creation of inter-subjective spaces of dialogue through incentives for warring parties rather than coercive means. It is worth noting that the perspective that this thesis offers entails an analysis of the first period (12 to 18 months) of operations led by the EU in the two countries. As this Chapter explained, the core crux that drives this thesis is an understanding of the frameworks through which the EU as a normative actor exercises its legitimacy in matters of conflict resolution, and how such frameworks might provide incentives for warring parties to de-escalate the hostilities. By focusing primarily on the first months of operations the thesis aims precisely at understanding the rationale behind certain foreign policy approaches to conflict resolution, and namely the preference for non-coercive means, as well as investigating the reactions that these approaches generated in Georgia and Ukraine. The thesis does not argue that what occurred in the first period of operations crystallised dynamics of violence in the two countries but reinforces the idea that the strategies deployed initially and their domestic perceptions necessarily influenced the evolution of the two situations.





## **Part II**

### **Chapter Three – The EU in Georgia: the case of the European Union Monitoring Mission (2008)**

#### **1. Introduction**

In order to understand how the EU, as an international normative actor, has projected its foreign policy in the resolution of the conflict in Georgia, the Chapter proceeds in four sections. The first one is dedicated to outline the background of the Georgian situation: in particular, this highlights the conditions in which the Union had to operate. The second section focuses specifically on the nature of the Georgian conflict, which seems to carry the embryonic seeds of the hybrid strategy that has recently characterised Russian approaches to warfare. The third one analyses the mandate of the EU as well as the reactions of Georgian and Russian authorities to its intervention. This section, on the one hand, reasserts the lack of vertical coherence in the EU's role in Georgia. On the other, stresses the importance of non-military tools for conflict resolution, which the Union adopts as a third-party actor. The section also highlights the importance of the neighbourhood policy, in consistency with the theoretical advancements of chapter 2. The fourth part of the Chapter relates the operations of the EU on Georgian territory, as well as its attitudes towards Russia, during the first year of the EUMM patrolling the border. This final section sustains the idea that the creation of intersubjective spaces for dialogue, and the promotion of incentives for actors to cease hostilities, constitutes a vital part towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.



This carries an important implication for the analysis that will be conducted in this chapter. Specifically, the implication is that the EU cannot be blamed for taking an alternative route when it clearly expressed this intention since 1957, as well as reiterating it throughout its entire history. The concluding section of this Chapter aims at unpacking the principal tools that the EU has adopted in the resolution of the Georgian conflict in the aftermath of the escalation, how they were received, and what hampered the Union from fully exercising its foreign policy actorness. Ultimately the Chapter argues that the EU's approach has focused mainly on the ENP, on the mobilisation of local NGOs, on financial assistance, and on the EUMM mission. These tools, it will be shown later on, are coherent with the perception of the EU as an international normative actor, and with the liberal approach to conflict resolution. However, the organisation's ability to impact on the Georgian conflict has been hampered by two major factors: first, the EU lacked vertical coherence. In the sense that many members of the Union projected different interests towards the Georgian conflict<sup>5</sup>. Second, a growing tension with Russia impeded the EU from being able to

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<sup>5</sup> These reactions can be easily understood by looking at the International statements given by the governments. While most member states took a position 'in the middle' to recognise a shared blame but also the integrity of the Georgian territory, a few others openly accused Russia.

Among the first group, Austria urged Russia to respect the territorial integrity of Georgia. Bulgaria supported a strong and active European position on the conflict in South Ossetia. In France, in a statement from the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Bernard Kouchner supported the territorial integrity of Georgia but underlined the importance of avoiding judgements on the war but rather stopping it. Also Germany tried to evaluate the situation looking at both ends. In fact, Foreign Minister Steinmeier officially demanded for all conflictual actions to be ceased immediately while Chancellor Merkel (during a meeting with Russian President Medvedev) described some of the Russian actions as disproportionate and insisted Russian troops should have withdrawn from Georgia. However, according to her, some of the Russian actions were reasonable and both sides were probably to blame. In Greece, the Foreign Minister proposed four targets: observance of the ceasefire; ending of operations; return to the previous status quo; and the beginning of a substantive dialogue. She also expressed support for Sarkozy's efforts through the EU. Ireland fully supported Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity welcoming the Georgian offer of a ceasefire and calling on all parties to accept it. In Italy, the government called on all parties to bring an immediate end to the violence and reach a lasting cessation of hostilities. Nevertheless, the Minister of Foreign Affairs highlighted that Italy would not push towards an anti-Russia coalition in Europe, and that Prime Minister Berlusconi was close to Putin's position.

engage fully with all the actors involved in the conflict. However, the chapter proceeds, it will be argued that given the nature of the Georgian conflict and its importance for the stability of the European neighbourhood, the EU is still the best option to deliver on the prospects of peace in the country.

## **2. The Background: from 1991 to 2008**

After the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in April of 1991, Georgia has experienced periods of political and territorial conflict which have led to a very

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On the Polish side, while Chairman of the Council of Ministers Donald Tusk made the initiative, by which the extraordinary European Council meeting in August 2008 was convened, President Kaczyński said that any interference in internal matters of Georgia was unacceptable and that any such action could have led to tragic consequences. Also, Poland and the US reached an agreement to establish American missiles inside Poland.

Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated that it was "regrettable" that the conflict in South Ossetia erupted during the Olympics and called on the EU to send a message to both sides to start the "political and diplomatic dialogue".

Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Bildt stated that it was extremely important that all those involved showed restraint and played their part in bringing about a political solution. Bildt also supported the hypothesis that the crisis was due to provocations from the South Ossetian border and that Georgian forces were trying to restore "the constitutional order". Also, the Prime Minister Reinfeldt halted all exercises and military ties between Sweden and Russia, claiming that the Russian invasion of Georgia was unacceptable and a violation of international law, changing the image of the country as an international player.

Finally, in the UK the Foreign and Commonwealth Office welcomed the offer of a ceasefire between the Georgia and the Russian governments.

Among the second group, Czech Republic Foreign Ministry released a statement fully supporting Georgia's claims of territorial integrity and indirectly blaming Russia for the crisis but the President declared that Russians were not the villains. Denmark condemned Russian aggression and fully supported the sovereignty of Georgia to be respected with diplomatic negotiation. The Estonian Parliament condemned Russian military aggression against Georgia and President Ilves declared that these events should be considered a persuasive argument towards NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine. Latvian parliament condemned Russia's military attack on Georgia and accused Russia to have violated Georgia's national sovereignty. In Hungary, Viktor Orban, who was leading the opposition, called the Russian intervention an "imperialist abuse of raw power".

fragile peace. The delicate political and social context mostly derives from Georgia's *de facto* independent republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (Cooley and Mitchell, 2010: 74-75) While it can be said that friction caused by these regions is only a part of the overall picture of the modern and democratic history of the country, it is undeniable that since the fall of the Soviet Union, the unresolved conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia continue to undermine the stability of the region. Both the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz disputes are very deeply rooted in the history of the Soviet Union and while all sides involved have interpreted them in different ways. (Grono, 2010: 9) However, both these conflicts have experienced eruptions into large-scale violence as soon as the USSR fell apart and competing claims could no longer be reconciled within the Soviet narrative: on one side, the Georgian demand for territorial integrity and, on the other side, the national self-determination claimed by both the separatist regions<sup>6</sup>. As exemplified by this stance and corroborated by an extensive literature on the two internal conflicts of Georgia, the EU mission in the country had to face the complexities of a relationship among various sub-state actors being characterised by inherent tensions. This means, for the scope of this thesis, that the EU faced a scenario in which its ability to alter the preconditions that created and fuelled such conflicts was to prove fundamental in the construction of a long-lasting peace. This naturally means that the priorities of the Organisation should have been structured around the idea of creating a safe-space for dialogue among warring parties via the promotion of incentives that would have eased the transition towards a peaceful future while mitigating the possibility of a re-escalation of conflicts.

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with EU Council staff, September 2018

The aforementioned preconditions have very specific historical roots. Abkhazia became an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSR) within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (GSSR) in 1931 and enjoyed a degree of independence. However, it has to be highlighted that Stalin decided to move part of the Georgian population to Abkhazia (Blauvet, 2007: 214-216). South Ossetia became instead an autonomous oblast, which means it was less independent than an ASSR, within the former GSSR. (Waever, 2013: 22) Then, at the beginning of the 1990s, both administrations sought full autonomy from Georgia which, at that point, had already changed the constitution and sent troops to avoid unwanted movements in the breakaway regions. It is worth reminding again that, at that point, both Abkhazia and South Ossetia were home to a significant minority of Georgians. (Jandieri, 2016) However, these intentions evolved in a war in Abkhazia from 1992 to 1993, a period during which more than two-hundred thousand ethnic Georgian fled, and a violent conflict in South Ossetia in 1991 which ended with establishment of a ceasefire one year after and more than twenty thousand fleeing to North Ossetia, followed by an OSCE Observer Mission, a Russia-led peacekeeping force and Joint Control Commission to facilitate cooperation between the sides on a daily basis. (Waever, 2013: 21-22; Whitman and Wolff: 2012: 93) This so called acceptance of the status quo worked with President Shevardnadze because the stability would benefit all sides.

On the Abkhaz side, the situation has actually been more complicated because the ceasefires were broken several times until May 1994 when a Russian-led CIS peacekeeping force was sent to the region along with a UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), following UN Security Council Resolution 854. Since then and until 2008, the situation has been more stable, except in the area of Kodori Gorge, a Georgian area in Abkhaz territory.

Eventually, both regions achieved *de facto* independence from Georgia, with the support of Russia. The constant presence of an actor as relevant as Russia in the relationship with these two regions was deemed to further complicate matters<sup>7</sup>. As evident from this excerpt, the idea that Russia became profoundly involved in the independence process of the two regions was to become one of the core issues that lied at the heart of the dialogic process towards the resolution of conflicts. In fact, the strong presence of such a powerful state-actor on one side created complexities in terms of negotiations, by altering the power-dynamics embedded in these regional conflicts. On the other, provided the conflict resolution process with the *potential* support of a great power. So the Russian attitude towards the two regions and their relationship with the Georgian government, and the Russian willingness to cooperate with the EU were considered by members of the Organisation as crucial determinants for a successful outcome of the Mission.

Later on, after the independence, during the 2003 bloodless Rose Revolution, thousands of citizens held demonstrations to contest the results of parliamentary elections and demanded the resignation of the President, Eduard Shevardnadze. The Georgian opposition was well-organised and non-violent: many soldiers deployed on the streets of Tbilisi were given red roses by the students and decided to lay down their guns. (Kandelaki, 2006: 1) However, a year later, in 2004, the new Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili, stated more than once his plan to restore full sovereignty across both regions (Hewitt, 2012; Waever, 2013; Whitman and Wolff: 2012: 93).

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with EU Council staff, September 2018

Nonetheless, conflicts in these regions in the 1990s and 2008 war had disastrous consequences for civilians on all sides, with the numbers of those killed, injured, or displaced amounting to the hundreds of thousands according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2016: 63-64), Human Rights Watch (2008) and International Crisis Group (2008).

What came after these events is the conflict representing the main object of investigation for this Chapter. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of August 2008, tension became evident once again, when the republic of Georgia experienced an armed confrontation in the region of South Ossetia. Although this region, separatist and close to Russia, is not recognised as an independent territory by the UN, (Brooks, 2012) Russia did not hesitate to send troops to defend the border. (Bloomfield, 2008; Schwartz, Barnard, and Chivers: 2008; Dawar, Womack, and Walker, 2008) The most exemplificative official statement on the justification for this military deployment this took place on 14 August 2008, when Medvedev appealed to the nature of the UN Charter to legitimise his stance by saying:

“We support any decision taken by the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in accordance with the charter of the United Nations, the 1966 international convention and the Helsinki Act on security in Europe. We don't just support this, but will guarantee them, both in the Caucasus and the world as a whole”. (Medvedev, 2008)

Russian President Medvedev continued on similar lines in 2009, when he stated that he had "taken into account the expression of free will by the Ossetian and Abkhaz

peoples". (Medvedev, 2009) Medvedev continued by saying that this recognition had ethical and humanitarian connotations, "[t]he most important thing was to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe to save the lives of people for whom we are responsible, because most of them they are Russian citizens, so we had to take a decision recognising the two states as independent." (Medvedev, 2009)

On the night between the 7th and the 8th of August, while Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was in Beijing for the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games and Dmitry Medvedev was out of office, a sustained Georgian artillery attack struck the town of Tskhinvali, capital of South Ossetia. The Georgian government asserted that it reacted to the movement of Russian troops entering the region and the South Ossetian heavy shelling of Georgian-controlled villages. Let's take a step back to point out that prior to August, 'Russia's interventions in Georgia's breakaway regions and Georgia's assertive conflict-resolution policies added new sources of conflict to existing root causes, deep-seated grievances and tensions between Georgians, Abkhaz and Ossetians'. (Grono, 2010: 10) Among the consequences of the clash between Georgia and Russia, all the involved sides (Russian, Georgian and Ossetian) 'violated laws of war, leaving behind thousands of victims of abuse and violence'<sup>8</sup>. (Grono, 2010: 10) There was severe damage to infrastructure and civilian property. Tbilisi lost control of additional territories in and around the zones of conflict. (Human Rights Watch, 2009) As already noted, the relationship between the Georgian government and Russia was one of the major concerns for EU officials. The military stance taken by the Russian government inherently exacerbated the tensions created during the

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<sup>8</sup> These perceptions were confirmed by several interviews with EU Council and Commission staff, September 2018

independentist movements. And it was precisely because of these increasing frictions that EU members strongly opposed a military avenue to resolve the conflict, claiming that they would have fuelled the tensions instead of pacifying them. From the 9th of August, the Russians responded by launching raids farther into Georgia. In fact, Russian warplanes bombed residential buildings in Gori situated 50 km from Tskhinvali, killing at least 11 civilians and injuring dozens (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

### *2.1 The nature of the conflict: an embryonic hybrid war*

According to Charap, the Russian new model of hybrid warfare was already present, albeit in its most embryonic form, in 2008 in Georgia. (Charap, 2015, p. 53) This is sustained by Lasica who claimed that “Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia demonstrated even wider, yet shallower aspects of hybrid war since the invasion displayed a heavier concentration of conventional warfare and seemingly less battle in the cognitive and moral domains”. (Lasica, 2009, p. 6)

In fact, in its engagement with the Georgian conflict, Russia had already blurred the lines between state-controlled forces and rogue mercenary forces. Furthermore, it already moved the domain of warfare from a pure conflict for territorial expansion, to the level of cognitive warfare by infusing military tactics with strong ideational narratives. (Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015, p. 468) More specifically, Bechna argued that Russian tactics in Georgia included “a combination of multiple conventional and unconventional tools, such as regular military forces, special and irregular forces, support of local unrest, “weaponization of information” and propaganda, diplomacy, cyber attacks and economic warfare.”(Bechna, 2016)



In fact, the evolution of Russian approaches to warfare followed the Gerasimov doctrine, explained in 2013, but that started revolutionising the concept of warfare in the Kremlin in the early 2000. (Mckew, 2017) The doctrine argues in favour of an empowerment of conventional military tools (reflected in the \$640 billion increase in military spending in 2010) (Monaghan, 2015, p. 69) to be conducted in conjuncture with other reforms that reflected the changing nature of war. First, Gerasimov argued in favour of the increasing importance of non-military means to achieve strategic goals. Second, he contended that states had to rely more often to local mercenaries, and most notably piracy. Third, he confirmed that war had to be “total” in the sense that warring parties necessarily have to shape media discourses to generate support at home and in the countries in which the conflicts break out. (McDermott, 2016, pp. 1–3)

In Georgia, since 2008, Russia has indeed deployed a variety of tactics that seem to confirm to the hybrid war strategy. Along with conventional military operations, Russia has attempted at isolating Georgia internationally through the undermining of the country’s closeness to the West. This has been done, for instance, through the attempt to project the image of Georgia as a failure of US tactics in post-soviet spheres, by indicating that the country had been war-torn and only superficially democratic since, at least, 2005. (Nilsson, 2016, p. 28) Furthermore, with the economic crisis and the strong economic relations between Georgia and Russia, the Kremlin has the possibility to put pressure on Georgia on the economic side as well. (Hall, 2018) Lastly, Russia has strong ties with local parties opposing the government and local NGOs and, in the words of Nilsson, “uses these ties to be ever-prepared to the possibility of aiding an internal subversion of the government.” (Nilsson, 2016, p. 40)

The Georgian economy, the trade relations and foreign investment suffered a severe stop as a consequence of the conflict<sup>9</sup>. From this opinion it is possible to imply that, while still embryonic in Georgia, the tactics deployed of hybrid warfare heavily complicated EU efforts towards conflict resolution. This is because, according to the interviewee, they blurred the lines between military and civilians while providing the Russian government with the possibility of denying responsibility. In any conflict-resolution process, as stated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, it is fundamental to identify the warring parties to start the dialogic process. Hybrid wars make this identification more complicated.

However, while recognising that the nature of hybrid conflicts implicitly complicates the pacification process, it also has been argued that this warfare strategy requires solutions that go beyond, and possibly marginalise, coercive attempts at conflict resolution. (Boll, 2019) The development of the Gerasimov doctrine was still germinal in Georgia, it can be argued that elements of it were already present in 2008. And this is why this the EU's approach to the solution of the Georgian conflict might have been more suited than direct confrontation through military means.

### **3. The EU's engagement- From the Independence to the 2008 Conflict: Contributions to the Resolution of the Conflict and limitations**

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<sup>9</sup> Interviews with former EUMM staff, June 2018

This section aims to highlight the main characteristics of the European engagement on the Georgian territory. In order to do so, the first part addresses the actions taken to build policies in the neighbourhood; the second part looks closely at the interaction between the EU and local actors; the third part, finally, explores the first year of the EUMM on the actual field: in particular, tries to assess as much as possible what are the main positive and negatives points. This moment will unfold looking at the contribution in the literature; the role of the media and interviews conducted by the author with international journalists, contract officers of the EUMM and Administrators of the European External Action Service, European Parliament and the European Commission.

### *3.1 Bringing security in a “Neighbourhood” far from the borders*

Many commentators inside and outside academia have underlined how the relationship with the Caucasian country has been quite minimal, even negligible, in the 1990s. This was because the EU was mainly seen as a possible partner for cooperation at the economic level, but the United States and NATO still represented more reliable security cooperation and investment partners (Shaffer, 2003; Nitkin, 2007; Freire and Simao, 2013). However, in 1999 the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between Georgia and the EU entered into force and started to strengthen the political dialogue on issues including security, stability, human rights, institutional reform and economic development. These were explicitly seen by the European Commission (1999) as a ‘way towards the resolution of regional conflicts and tensions’. Whitman and Wolff (2012: 95) continue explaining that the Country Strategy Paper, issued by the European Commission in 2001 (7-10), identified again the conflicts with the two secessionist regions not only as an ‘impediment to

development in Georgia’ but also one of the main factors contributing to regional instability.

In consistency with the theoretical elements provided in Chapter 2 of a progressively more proactive role of the EU in conflict resolution, at least within its borders, the EU started monitoring the situation closely in the early 2000s. In 2003, the ESS highlighted that “frozen conflicts, which also persist on our borders, threaten regional stability ( ... ) and pose problems for Europe” and requested that EU “should take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus”. (ESS, 2003: 35)

More to the point, in the same year the Commission revised the Country Strategy Paper expressing the intention to “support efforts [aimed to] prevent[ion] and resol[ution] of the conflicts as well as post conflict rehabilitation’. This is a concept that has been reiterated again in 2007 after the Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, was alarmed by what she defined a ‘failure of all parties to deliver on conflict settlement’ (European Commission, 2006). In order to avoid the consequences caused by a possible escalation of tensions (Ferrero-Waldner, 2006; Whitman and Wolff, 2012: 95), in the updated Country Strategy Paper, the EU underlined again, with even more emphasis, its involvement towards a ‘pacific settlement’ of the conflicts with the two secessionist regions (European Commission, 2007).

This disposition towards a more effective role in the region was reflected ‘through the provision of financial assistance to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation projects’ in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (European Commission, 2007) and in the appointment of the Finnish Ambassador Heikki Talvitie as the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) to the South Caucasus. Specifically, the Special

Representatives promote the EU's policies and interests in troubled regions and countries and play an active role in the development of a stronger and more effective EU Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and in the Union's efforts to become a more effective, more coherent and more capable actor in order to consolidate peace, stability and the rule of law. In the case of the South Caucasus (and Georgia in particular), among the objectives of the mandate it is essential to underline how the presence of the EUSR has to “contribute to the prevention of conflicts and to assist in creating the conditions for progress on settlement of conflicts, including through recommendations for action related to civil society and rehabilitation of the territories without prejudice to the Commission's responsibilities under the EC Treaty” and to “contribute to the settlement of conflicts and to facilitate the implementation of such settlement in close coordination with the United Nations Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Georgia, the Group of Friends of the United Nations Secretary-General for Georgia, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its Minsk Group, and the conflict resolution mechanism for South Ossetia”. In addition, other key priorities included “developing contacts with governments, parliaments<sup>10</sup>, judiciary and civil society in the region” and “intensifying the European Union's dialogue with the main interested actors concerning the region”. This sustains one of the crucial points of this thesis that stressed the importance of understanding EU efforts in this domain as necessarily dialogical. And that this dialogue needs to be based on mutual recognitions of legitimacy between the EU and local actors, as well as on the idea that norms only spread to the extent that they

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, Brussels, September 2018 - In the past ten years the communication with Georgian MPs has been positive. The Georgian Parliament consists of 150 members and almost 90% of them speaks fluent English and a very high percentage has studied abroad. This has eased the collaboration with EU officers and, in particular, with programmes aimed to collaboration with the European Parliament. It is also significant that EU-Georgia Association Agreement is the first link available for consultation on the Georgian Parliament website (<http://www.parliament.ge/en/>)

persuade potential norm-followers (in this case local governments) to abide to them. As underlined by Grevi and Telo (2007: 57), since the beginning of the mandate, the EUSR was assigned a role of policy input beyond the implementation of the Brussels' guidelines, even if with a limited budget and not political advisor based in the region. It is evident in the statements mentioned above that the EU was to continue to sustain its long-standing commitment in conflict resolution as passing through agreements structured in the frame of its Neighbourhood policies.

In fact, it is interesting to note, this stance greatly eased the construction of a stronger relationship between the EU and the Georgian government, exactly with the inclusion of Georgia in the ENP in 2004. According to Whitman and Wolff, in fact, the 2007 Country Strategy must be seen in the context of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in which Georgia had become a participant at its launch in 2004. As a result, while the 1999 PCA remains the legal foundation of EU–Georgia relations, it is now the ENP Action Plan that provides the framework for EU assistance and it is the ENP instruments (principally, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF)) that are the primary tools through which policy is implemented (Whitman and Wolff, 2010: 90)

Very clearly, the strong point of the ENP has been to set out a framework to facilitate the EU's relations with sixteen of the Eastern and Southern Neighbours in order to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration, and came with the restatement of EU commitment to contributing “to support efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts as well as post conflict rehabilitation with the two secessionist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia”. (ENP, 2004) At this point, the change of government after the Rose Revolution was reason to believe that quick improvements would take place. And so,

in the space of five years, while the PCA only briefly mentioned the breakaway regions in the Political Dialogue Section, the ENP Action Plan brought this issue to the Priority Area (actually the sixth one on a list of eight priorities): however, it was very clear that the actions to be taken towards the conflict settlement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia had to respect ‘the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders’ (European Commission, 2006; Whitman and Wolff, 2012: 96).

The importance of the Neighbourhood Policy was further reasserted by Paul, who argued that

“Through instruments such as its European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has also used contractual relationships, based on a reward system delivering financial and technical assistance and other economic and political benefits subject to the fulfilment of conditions, in a whole range of areas. These have included local conflict-resolution initiatives and the more general and longer-term process of ‘socialising’ conflict parties in line with the Union’s norms and values” (e.g. democracy, human rights, and the rule of law). (Paul, 2009)

Paul’s remarks have to be read in consistency with the advancements of liberal-institutionalism and the EU’s foreign policy actorness addressed in chapter 2 of this thesis. Specifically, the ENP represented those incentives and structures that the EU deployed to intervene in a non-military manner in a scenario of conflict. It is also worth reiterating that, according to several EU officials, the Georgian Parliament has

demonstrated an efficient interest in capacity building (for example, more than Ukraine) and a collaborative behaviour towards the European Parliament<sup>11</sup>.

As evident from this interview, not only the EU institutionally had started to look at Georgia as a potential partner, but also found a political environment open to dialogue. This is not a minor point, the composition of the political elite in Georgia, by virtue of being mostly pro-European, facilitated at least the beginning of negotiations. In fact, for at least one of the parties involved in the conflict, the EU was perceived to be a legitimate mediator. As already stated, legitimacy is one of the core components that this thesis regards as fundamental for the Organisation to be effective in the exercise of its mandate.

After the conflict with Russia, and, most importantly for the purpose of this research, during the first year of the EUMM, this connection became even stronger when Georgia (together with Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan) became effective part of the new Eastern Partnership (EaP) launched in Prague in May 2009 (Council of European Union, 2009). In fact, according to the funding treaty, the main aim of the EaP is the enhancement of the prosperity, stability and security of an enlarged EU and its neighbours. Further than that, as well as bolstering reforms, the EaP works towards greater mobility of citizens and stronger collaboration in a number of sectors, such as transport, energy and the environment. From the policies and statements quoted above it seemed that in preparation of a potential escalation of conflict, the main aim for the EU was to be perceived as a coherent actor willing to establish a fruitful relation with Georgia through means of reciprocity. This is

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, September 2018



particularly evident in the formulation of the Association Agreement (consequence of the 2004 ENP) which, in its Political Dialogue and Cooperation section, reads that the expectations of the EU were to:

a) strengthen the EU's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and ensure the applicability of the agreement, once it has been concluded, to the whole territory of Georgia; to that end, continue actively engaging in conflict resolution, inter alia thanks to the EUMM;

(b) Stress the need for the safe and dignified return of all internally-displaced persons and refugees to their places of permanent residence and the unacceptability of the forced demographic changes;

(c) emphasise the importance of inter-ethnic and religious tolerance; welcome recent law adopted by the Georgian Parliament on the registration of religious organisations and affirmative action measures adopted by the Georgian Government in the field of education, aiming at a better integration of national minorities. (EU-Georgia Association Agreement, 2016)

It seems that in terms of horizontal coherence, or the idea that EU foreign policies should not contradict each other in specific scenarios, was fulfilled in Georgia. One of the EU officials talking part in the interviews, stressed the importance of the coordination of policy efforts<sup>12</sup>. It seems evident from this extract that this horizontal coherence was carefully planned and regarded as highly important in the development of policies for the resolution of the Georgian tensions. This sustains the theoretical positions advanced in Chapter 2, where coherence (both vertical and horizontal) have

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews with European Parliament staff, September 2018

been indicated as fundamental nodal points for the EU to be perceived as a coherent actor in conflict resolution.

In fact, the two most vital structures that the EU advanced to sustain its efforts in the country, the ENP and the EUMM, shared their objectives and strategies to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict. All in all, the ENP and the EUMM mission were the tools that the EU as a foreign policy actor deployed to provide incentives and structures for warring parties to begin a process of conflict resolution. In line with the theoretical tenets of chapter 2, this has to be understood as a way to promote peace in a non-coercive manner, which seems an essential precondition in situations of hybrid warfare such as Georgia. However, it will be noted in the following sections, how these strategies have been hampered essentially by two factors: the lack of vertical coherence among member states and the Union, and the growing distrustful perception that Russia developed in respect to the organisation.

### *3.2 The Interaction between the EU and Local Actors in Georgia*

This section aims to highlight what structures and policies the EU has promoted in Georgia, and how they were received, before focusing especially on the EUMM. As such, the section highlights the relationship between the organisation and local NGOs, the role of the ENP, the financial assistance provided by the EU to Georgia, and the ceasefire agreement, as part of the EU foreign policy towards the country. These tools have to be read mostly as structures and incentives that the EU promoted in order to arrive at a pacification of the conflict, coherently with the liberal interpretation of conflict resolution. One point of contention that will also be highlighted is the fact that the EU attempted at shaping its own members interests in the region by formulating

these policies. This, however, was only partially achieved and resulted in an overall lack of vertical coherence that greatly hampered the Union's efforts in the resolution of the conflict.

As anticipated in the previous paragraph, on the 7th of August, 2008 Georgia and Russia clashed in a five-day war. This happened after Georgia sent troops to South Ossetia in the attempt to regain control over the separatist region. The roots of these actions may well be found in another troubled region, the Balkans. In fact, it can be said that it all started after Kosovo's declaration of independence a few months before, in February of the same year. Its eventual recognition by several of the EU's (then) 27 member states, created an advantageous precedent for Russia. Also, Georgia's aspiration to become part of NATO and NATO's offer to a path toward membership, as declared at the Bucharest summit in April 2008, was not at all welcomed by Russia. (Klussmann, 2008; Oliphant, 2015) According to the International Conflict Group (2008), (and to Chancellor Angela Merkel) Russia had multiple aims: 'to punish Georgia for its NATO ambitions; to warn others, especially Ukraine; and to humiliate NATO by showing it to be indecisive and ineffective'. (See also Oliphant, 2015; Kakabadze, 2008; Harding and Meikle, 2008; Merkel, 2014)

In the direct aftermath of the outbreak of the Georgian conflict, many commentators argued that the EU had failed in understanding the growing Russian interest in the region, and Putin's distrust of the EU. This is what Ryan Grist, former senior OSCE official, meant when he said that "[t]here clearly was not the eye on the ball on the higher diplomatic level I would say. Because it was clear that something was brewing." He said he had made it "very clear" at a briefing to ambassadors there was a "severe escalation". (Meier, 2008: 22) Elling, contributed to this discussion by claiming that "[t]he early warning system based on intelligence analysis did not deliver the necessary

results”. It is interesting to note that the EU was blamed for being unable to prevent the escalation of the conflict, and this is *per se* a very intriguing suggestion. The fact that the EU had been too focused on the creation of a space for dialogue among prominent actors, while overlooking the actions that were taking place at a sub-state level is, probably, one of the most important lessons to be learnt from the EU approach to the Georgian conflict. In contingency with its own mandate, in fact, the Organisation should dedicate particular attention to sub-state actors in terms of identification of potential escalations of conflicts, info-sharing, and to achieve a much needed connection with local realities. The coordination of the EU with local actors is, therefore, not only fundamental in terms of being better able to grasp embryonic signs of conflict, but also to coordinate conflict-resolution efforts with sub-state actors and NGOs.

Specifically on this, and according to the EUMM, an essential component in the resolution of the Georgian conflict is information sharing. (EUMM, 2008) Information sharing largely rests on a relationship between information gathering mechanisms, particularly NGOs, and international actors. Authors acknowledged the importance of NGOs in any information gathering process because of their supposed independence from the state (May and Hoffman, 1991: 5). In particular, NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, can act as a system of checking on conflict indicators within a country. The release of annual reports from these bodies specifically aims at the creation of a system of ‘red-lights’ to signal the potential escalation of violent tensions in fragile contexts. (Human Rights First, 2004) On the specific Georgian case, Transparency International (TI), one of the most active NGOs in the country, argued that the organisation should act as an “active monitor”, watching the actions of government and donors in their policy planning and stepping

in when “[we] believe that the process does not meet accountability and transparency standards”.(Transparency International, 2010: 5)

In this sense, NGOs do not play a passive role in monitoring. But actively seek to gather fundamental information that then should be transmitted to the government and to international actors in order to have an impact on the Georgian territory. For example, in order to prevent the re-escalation of conflicts or to build strong communities for the promotion of economic and social welfare. And these actions can be read as patterns for those structural policies that the EU had attempted to put in place through the EUMM. For example, ‘For Better Future’ is a Georgian NGO founded in 2002 that empowers IDP women and youth by providing professional development training and peacebuilding skills in order to promote a sustainable community with effective and active civic participation. Most of the organisation's beneficiaries are IDPs from the 2008 conflict: peacebuilding and conflict-resolution process for the South Ossetia region is a primary focus for the organisation. Since 2009, it collaborates with several other local and international organisations to promote confidence-building and dialogue techniques<sup>13</sup>. The EUMM is one of the actors involved in these projects: in fact, since its first year on the Georgian territory, its personnel has been present at several meetings and conferences such as project management for promotion of civil society development and activities for peacebuilding and the future of IDPs<sup>14</sup>.

In addition, according to Natalia Shapovalova, the relationship between NGOs and the EUMM in Georgia has been structured around four key points:

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<sup>13</sup> More information about the main aims and projects of the organisation can be found at <https://www.yfbf.org/>

<sup>14</sup> Interview with former EUMM staff, June 2018

(1) stabilisation – civil society is regarded as helpful in ensuring democratic oversight of security actors in Georgia; moreover, from a human security perspective, NGOs also act as security actors as they provide essential services such as food and water to the conflict-affected population; (2) normalisation – civil society is seen as instrumental in promoting the rule of law and human security, and improving the situation of the displaced and conflict-affected population; (3) confidence-building – confidence-building activities promoted by civil society and involving the conflict-affected populations on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) are seen as important, and given the lack of the mission’s access to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, civil society actors help the mission to better understand the situation in the breakaway regions and (4) information gathering and verification – NGOs are viewed as another source of information. (Shapovalova, 2016: 331)

Of particular interest for the scope of this section is point number (4) in which NGOs are seen as fundamental in the gathering of preliminary information to be transmitted to the EUMM. For instance, in a 2009 report, Transparency International highlighted how Georgia needed to “improve the implementation of due process and the protection of human rights by: strengthening the legal framework; improving management of justice system institutions; enhancing the capacity of legal professionals, and improving access to justice of marginalised groups”.(Gould and Pate, 2016)

The efficacy of the relationship between the EU and NGOs is still widely debated and no straight answer seems to dominate other views. Lynch, for instance, concurred with such view, when argued that overall “[o]ne should recognise that the early warning activities of the OSCE were far from perfect” because EU agencies failed to recognise the potential signs of escalation. (Lynch, 2010) However, Lynch himself claimed that

“[t]he OSCE helped to halt the escalation of hostilities in and around South Ossetia. In 2008, early warning worked well on the whole. But OSCE actions proved insufficient to offset what had become an entrenched logic of escalation”. (Lynch, 2010) On the policy-makers side, this time US candidate claimed that the deployment of American “antitank capabilities, air defences, early-warning radar, and other defensive systems” (Charap and Welt, 2010: 32-33) could have helped in the stabilisation of the conflict. However, after almost ten years from the outbreak of the conflict, analysts are still divided between those who claim that the “Russian invasion of Georgia and occupation of its territories due to the fact that the international community failed to effectively respond to early warning signs”, (Bakradze, 2017) and those who claim that this mechanism is quintessential for conflict resolution. (UNDP, 2015) What it can be gathered from these opposing views is that there exists no consensus on whether the other structural incentives provided by the EU worked well or not. This is to be imputed to the very nebulous concept of conflict prevention itself, which the actions of the preventer can only be seen when it fails in fulfilling its goal. This is not to say that the EU is exempt of responsibilities in terms of the escalation of the tensions, but commentators often regarded this problem as exemplificative of a broader failure of the organisation in its conflict-resolution mandate.

The merits of the EU, on the other hand, have often been silenced. First of all, because of the legitimacy that derives from its contractual nature, the EU was able to launch a Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) on the 1st of October 2008. This happened despite different starting points on how to approach the conflict. Precisely because of these different starting points however, it can be claimed that one of the major obstacles that the EU faced in the Georgian situation was the lack of internal

coherence. According to Paul (2009) in fact, each Member State prioritises different countries in different ways, and this determines whether or not they put a premium on conflict settlement. In the case of Moldova, for example, this has meant that the EU has not been able to play a more active role beyond its current observer status in April 2009 35 the 5+2 talks on Transnistria, even though a 2+2 format (EU/Russia + Moldova/Transnistria) would be far more promising for reaching a durable settlement.

This is further sustained by Whitman and Wolff who argued that the role of the EU in Georgia has been further constrained by the complex relationship between the European institutions themselves and its Member States. Reaching common positions among 27 countries<sup>15</sup> with diverging interests is difficult at the best of times, and close to impossible when it comes to a case like the Russia-Georgia war – where Member States start from very different perceptions of, and responses to, Russia. (Whitman and Wolff, 2010: 91)

Finally, Valasek confirms these points by pointing out precisely that EU member-states gave varied responses to the crisis. France, the holder of the rotating EU presidency, refused to condemn either side. Similarly, the German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that Europe should be “an honest broker”. (Valasek, 2009: 1)

A cautious position of France and Germany (and, on a more general level, of the Western European countries) is opposed to a slightly different tone of the Eastern European ones, leaning towards an interventionist approach<sup>16</sup>. From this interview it

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<sup>15</sup> The timeframe of investigation for the Georgian case makes reference to a period before the access of Croatia to the EU in 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews with former EUMM staff and EU Council staff, 2018



is possible to confirm what has been already said above. In fact, while horizontal coherence was carefully considered in terms of formulations of policies that did not contradict each other, the same cannot be said about vertical coherence. The interviewee stresses this, and this reinforces one of the theoretical provisions of this thesis that claims that a coordination between the interests of single member states with the broader normative goals of the EU and their institutional articulations.

Regardless of these controversies however, and as stated by the arrangements set out in the six-point agreement between Georgia and Russia of the 12th of August 2008, the EU ensured the implementation of the ceasefire agreement reached on the 8th of September 2008 (Pirozzi, 2012). The four priorities established in the mandate of the EUMM are as follows

- to ensure that there is no return to hostilities;
- to facilitate the resumption of a safe and normal life for the local communities living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) with Abkhazia and South Ossetia;
- to build confidence among the conflict parties;
- to inform EU policy in Georgia and the wider region. (EUMM, 2008)

The mandate has been elaborated following the editing of the six-point ceasefire plan agreed by both Russia and Georgia on the 12th of August. This date has been considered as a turning point for the EU's role in conflict management: as it is well

known, the French Presidency of the Council of the EU<sup>17</sup> led the mediation on behalf of the EU and was received as a success<sup>18</sup> by European and international media (Delcour, 2011). The six points of the agreement were as follows:

- Not to resort to force;
- To end hostilities definitively;
- To provide free access for humanitarian aid;
- Georgian military forces will have to withdraw to their usual bases;
- Russian military forces will have to withdraw to the lines held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Pending an international mechanism, Russian peace-keeping forces will implement additional security measures;
- Opening of international talks on the security and stability arrangements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (EUMM, 2008)

It is evident that the EU was not to compromise its historical preference for non-military solutions to conflict over more coercive ones. In practice, after the signing of the ceasefire agreement and the deployment of EUMM in Georgia, there have not been

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<sup>17</sup> While the negotiation was led by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, it is fundamental to stress how this role has been played on behalf of the EU asserting its functions as a security actor in the neighbourhood. More specifically, the presidency of the Council rotates among the EU member states every six months. During this 6-month period, the presidency chairs meetings at every level in the Council in order to help ensuring the continuity of the EU's work in the Council.

In 2009 the Lisbon Treaty introduced a system that allows member states holding the presidency to work together in a closely manner, in groups of three. These are called 'trios'. In this way, the trio is able to set long-term goals and prepares a common agenda that will determine the topics and the most important issues that have to be addressed by the Council over a period of time of 18 months. As a consequence, on the basis of this programme, each of the three countries prepares its own more detailed 6-month programme. At the time of the negotiation, the trios was composed by Slovenia, France and Czech Republic.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with former EUMM staff, June 2018

other major violent upheavals in the region. The war, per se, lasted five days and the count of fatalities is currently been re-estimated around 100 people (as opposed to initial Russian initial claims of over 2000 deaths). (Parfitt, 2008; BBC News, 2008; Bahrapour, 2008) And this is a fact that is often downplayed in the critiques moved to the EU in conflict resolution. This is, however, not a justification to diminish the importance of the number of displaced people, which is immensely high, but by any means any escalation of tensions that ends within five days from its start with a death toll still in double digits is an extraordinary event in conflict resolution history of recent times. While understanding that the cessation of hostilities has to be understood in full cognizance of a vast array of factors that contributed to it, de-escalation of violence, regarded naturally as the most critical component of conflict resolution strategies, should be held in greater consideration. Furthermore, the EU's presence in Georgia articulated in four different manifestations: the EUMM; EU's delegation in Tbilisi; the EU special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus, appointed in 2003; and the EUSR for the conflict in Georgia,<sup>19</sup> (an action directed to

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<sup>19</sup> It has to be said that the relationship between the two EUSR and the EUMM has not been easy because of overlapping competences and functions. Before 2011, the mandate was divided into two different components and covered by Ambassador Jacques Morel (EUSR for the crisis in Georgia from September 2008 until August 2011) and Ambassador Peter Semneby (EUSR for the South Caucasus from February 2006 until February 2011). At this point, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, decided to merge the two EUSR positions: Philippe Lefort was appointed EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the conflict in Georgia on the 1st of September 2011. The EUMM's significance was enhanced because it soon became the only international presence in Georgia: in fact, Russia pushed for the closure of the United Nation Mission (UNOMIG) in Abkhazia in 2008 and the OSCE Mission in South Ossetia in 2009 (On information about this can be found in Pirozzi, 2012).

please the French EU Presidency but that has been received as undermining the EUSR for the South Caucasus' role) appointed in September 2008 to represent the EU at the Geneva talks and facilitate the implementation of the settlement plan between Georgia and Russia. It is important to underline that the political weight of the EU in the Geneva settlement negotiations was considerably higher than it had been in previous occasions. Moreover, the 2008 report on the implementation of the ESS underlined specifically the situation of the conflicts in Georgia, emphasising that “since 2003, the EU has increasingly made a difference in addressing conflict and conflict, in places such as (...) Georgia” and pointing out that “the situation in Georgia, concerning Abkhazia and South Ossetia, has escalated, leading to an armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. The EU led the international response, through mediation between the parties, humanitarian assistance, a civilian monitoring mission, and substantial financial support” (Council of the European Union, 2008). In fact, in terms of financial support (which, as already stated, is a crucial component in the liberal approach to conflict resolution), according to Whitman and Wolff (2010: 91), the main bulk of EU initiatives and funding has gone to rehabilitation projects, with the aim of contributing to economic and infrastructural development and thereby also building confidence between the different parties. Specifically, the EU allocated €25 million to Abkhazia and €8 million to South Ossetia between 1997 and 2006, making it the largest foreign donor. In addition, just over €100 million was spent on humanitarian assistance under ECHO between 1993 and 2006, primarily ‘targeting population groups affected by the conflict’ and increasingly concentrating on food

security and income-generating activities for internally displaced people and other vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, the Commission provided 9 million of euros for immediate humanitarian aid for Internally Displaced Persons, followed by a pledge with the World Bank (WB) for 5 hundred million of euros for several projects, including humanitarian assistance (8 million of euros), support for IDPs (for almost 80 million of euros) and for the EUMM (37 million of euros for the first year of the mission). (Whitman and Wolff, 2012: 97) In line with the idea that the promotion of incentives, and the bettering of economic conditions, ease the pacification of conflicts, it must be acknowledged that the EU in Georgia has taken a decisive step.

The mere fact that the EU was allowed to maintain a constant presence in a sovereign state should also be held in greater consideration when debating the EU approach to Georgia. In fact, when states act under the label of humanitarian intervention the reactions from local governments tend to be very different. The EU, for its contractual nature and its constructed image as a strategic partner for its member states, gained access to regions in Georgia. (Esslemont, 2009) Precisely because of this contractual right, one year after the Five-Days crisis, in August 2009, while the humanitarian assistance programmes run by the EU have continued systematically, the political process has stalled Russian expansionism in Georgia, (Traynor and Harding, 2008; Whitman and Wolff, 2012: 98) but a resolution of the two conflicts is still to be reached. In fact, shortly after the new elected President Barack Obama visited Moscow and Tbilisi, Russian authorities restated the intention to protect the two separatist regions against a possible Georgian aggression, actually closing any possible resolution to the conflicts and sending a clear message to the western countries (Gordadze, 2011). Since then the EU remained firmly committed to its policy of supporting Georgia's

territorial integrity within its internationally-recognised borders as well as engagement with the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in support of longer-term conflict resolution. Additionally, to address wider regional challenges of environmental concerns in the Black Sea region, the EU initiated increased cooperation through the Black Sea Synergy (BSS).

So far, the section has highlighted that the fallacies of the EU have been greatly emphasised by analysts and policy-makers in the assessment of the contribution to the pacification of the Georgian conflict, while its merits have been greatly understated. This notion doesn't disregard the fact that despite agreeing to leave the two regions after the 11 October 2008, Russian troops failed to do so in both regions (Coffey, 2015; Guo, 2010; Brown, 2017). And that this, of course, exacerbated tensions between Georgian and Russian authorities, and at the same time hampered the patrolling mission of the EU.

But these tensions failed to amount to a renewed escalation of conflict and this often is understated. But the section also highlighted that despite initial differences from member states on the approach to undertake in the resolution of the Georgian conflict,<sup>20</sup> the EU was able to deploy an extremely articulated mission, composed of four different organs, which eventually contributed to the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 2008.

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<sup>20</sup> For instance, Nicolas Sarkozy seemed to argue in favour of a more 'force based' approach when he threatened Russia after the failure of a prompt pulling out after the ceasefire agreement (Sarkozy, 2008). Similarly, Angela Merkel has often changed her position over President Mikheil Saakashvili, from ostensibly against in 2007, to warming in 2008. And Gordon Brown repeatedly argued that a soft-approach to the situation would not have worked out. (Brown, 2008)

The recognition of the fact that the EU acted as a global security actor does not derive solely from the fact that eventually the different positions of very influential leaders that attempted at arguing in favour of a more muscular approach were subdued in the formation of the EUMM. In fact, it can also be derived by looking at the Georgian and Russian narratives that emerged in the direct aftermath of the conflict, which acknowledge the importance of the EU as an international actor and not just as a simple aggregated composition of 27 different members.

Already in 2004, with the preparations for the Treaty of Accession in place, Saakashvili called for a 'permanent home in the European family of nations, for Georgia; (Saakashvili, 2004). And interestingly added that the EU should have taken a more decisive role as a peace facilitator (Saakashvili, 2004). Also, in 2008 the Georgian President also brought in the OSCE monitoring mission as a legitimising factor in claiming that the Russian response in Georgia was unjustified (Saakashvili, 2008). Treating the EU as a sole voice was to become a cornerstone in Saakashvili foreign policy addresses. This has been restated, for instance, in 2013 (a period that goes beyond the focus of the investigation but that provides an idea of the evolution of the EU commitment in the region and the perception of the receiving actors) when he declared that the EU was the best hope for those oppressed countries around the world to achieve freedom and democracy. (Saakashvili, 2013) And it is also interesting to note that when the Georgian President made remarks about failures in Western diplomacy he was not aiming at blaming the EU as a whole, but rather singling out member states, as happened in 2008 for Germany. (Saakashvili, 2008) So, the main notion to extrapolate here is that, at least within Georgia, not only the EU was perceived as capable of taking actions towards the resolution of conflict when it intervened to pacify the situation in Georgia, but also that the Georgian president is

very wary of generalising about the perceived failures of the Union. This, theoretically, is related to the notion of perceptions and misperceptions unpacked in chapter 2, which sustains the idea that not only the EU has to formulate coherent policies but has also to be perceived as doing so.

On the Russian side, former president Medvedev has described the EU as one of the main actors to work with in that specific situation. In an excerpt from his speech delivered in occasion of his election in 2008, he clarified that ‘We will work together on this with the United States, the European Union, the BRIC countries and all parties with an interest in reform. We will do everything possible to make the world a fairer and safer place.’ (Medvedev, 2008) Even in the wake of the escalation of the conflict he failed to single out member states from the EU, when he stated that

The Georgian leadership chose another way. Disrupting the negotiating process, ignoring the agreements achieved, committing political and military provocations, attacking the peacekeepers – all these actions grossly violated the regime established in conflict zones with the support of the United Nations and OSCE. (Medvedev, 2008b)

One year after the break-out of the Georgian conflict, Medvedev repeated this conceptualisation by stating that

“We should examine the possibility of using the relevant European Union norms in order to draft more rapidly our own construction regulations, because this is something that has been dragging on for too long here”.  
(Medvedev, 2009)

In the speeches outlined above, both the sides of the Georgian conflict fail to single out members from the EU, with the exception of Saakashvili’s mentioning of Germany in



the context of negative repercussions of EU politics. This, along with the fact that *ex-post* an analysis of the creation of the EUMM cannot disregard the fact that the mission was created despite initial scepticism from single member states who argued for different solutions during the Georgian conflict.

#### **4. The EUMM on the field**

This final section aims to look at the first year on the field of the EUMM. As explained previously in this chapter, the decision to include the countries of the Southern Caucasus in the ENP in 2004, and the consequential improvement of the relations with the EU, can be found mainly in two events: an internal one, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, and an external one, the shift in security alignments happened after 9/11 in the United States (Freire and Simao, 2013: 7).

Eventually, at the Bucharest NATO summit, in April 2008, Georgia and Ukraine were denied full membership perspectives, but neither European leaders nor officials working for OSCE and NATO, to which both countries had appealed for mediation, were capable to put in place a preventive political action to face an evident Russian disapproval of the request. The Eastern European countries, in fact, leaned towards supporting the US-driven proposal to grant Georgia and Ukraine the Membership Action Plan, while Germany and France kept a more cautious position. (Grono, 2010: 16) As stated at Point 23 of the Summit Declaration:

NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations. We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May. Membership Action Plan (MAP) is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. Today we make clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP. Therefore we will now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to their MAP applications. We have asked Foreign Ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. Foreign Ministers have the authority to decide on the MAP applications of Ukraine and Georgia. (NATO, 2008)

Unfortunately, this was not the only worrying factor: in fact, from April until August, when the conflict escalated, there was more than one aspect that highlighted the necessity to improve the European engagement in the region, especially from a security point of view. In fact, Russia was building up military positions in both secessionist regions (Popjanevski, 2009: 143-150; Freire and Simao, 2013: 10) and Georgia interpreted these movements as a signal of imminent invasion. Also, as it will be reminded later on in this paragraph, the Russian position on these territories 'became a point of contention regarding who ignited violence and the monitoring of the cease-fire agreement, for which the EUMM was responsible'. (Freire and Simao, 2013: 10)

As it has been already underlined, the EUMM was established on September 15, 2008 following a request of the Georgian government for the EU to deploy a monitoring mission on the territory. This was a moment when, of course, the EU was one of at least three actors operating on the ground. While the mission officially started on October 1, the first round of negotiations, the Geneva talks, took place on October 14 through the cooperation with the OSCE, involving the EU, the OSCE, the UN and the United States, as well as the conflict parties, Georgia and Russia (OSCE Press Release, 2008; Freire and Simao, 2013). Russia very clearly pushed to include Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the table; a position that the EU and the OSCE accepted but that was not seen positively by the Georgian representatives which eventually accepted as well. At this point, for the first time since the establishment of the ENP, the EU was directly involved in the resolution of the conflict in the South Caucasus.

On the other side, Russia's intention to get international actors to recognise the independent position (or at least the status quo) of the two secessionist regions led to pressure OSCE for the opening of a new office in Tskhinvali, in South Ossetia, and further complicated an already complex situation, (Freire and Simao, 2013)

However, just a few months later, the OSCE and the UN missions' mandates were not renewed, exactly because of Russia's opposition, making the EU the only international presence in the field (Whitman and Wolff, 2010: 88). This situation was a turning point for the EU as a global actor (Whitman and Wolff, 2012): on the one hand, the EU was finally fully responsible of the events in Georgia and as such, of the resolution of the conflict and the consequent security of the region; on the other hand, this became also the main occasion to test if the EU was really capable to perform as global security actor.

The mandate of the mission was very clear and simple from the start, ‘centred on security assurance aiming at four main goals: stabilisation, normalisation, confidence building and reporting to the EU and its Member States in order to inform European policymaking and thus contribute to EU engagement in the region (Council of the European Union, 2008: article 1 and 3; EUMM, 2018). The EUMM’s main aim was to provide ‘civilian monitoring of Parties’ actions, including full compliance with the six-point Agreement and subsequent implementing measures throughout Georgia’ (ibidem: article 2). In a nutshell, the mission was to improve the ‘consolidation of stability in Georgia and surrounding areas, as well as contribute to minimise any possibilities of a resumption of violence, through guaranteeing the agreed provisions at the political level are enforced’. (Freire and Simao, 2013) Since its first day on the field, the EUMM was ‘mandated to cover the whole territory of Georgia, within the country’s internationally recognised borders’. However, ‘other than a few joint visits on specific cases, the de-facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have so far denied the Mission access to the territories under their control’. (EUMM, 2018) Despite the comprehensive mandate, even if this is not included among the main aims of this section, as Freire and Simao (2013) suggested, it is interesting to highlight how, ten years later, the initial mandate of the mission has retained its essence (Council of the European Union, 2009; Council of the European Union, 2010; Council of the European Union, 2011; Council of the European Union, 2012). This sustains what has been said above and recalls the idea that the pro-European stance of a vast part of the Georgian political elite did not resonate with Abkhazian and South Ossetian leaders. While this seems to be a logical position for parties involved in the conflict, the EU Officials interviewed also noted that it is only because of the inherently non-conflictual nature of the EU that talks still continuously happened in spite of the denial for EU

troops to access portions of these regions<sup>21</sup>. And this is strongly related with the uniqueness of the EU as an international normative actor that makes the Organisation less susceptible to open confrontation even from actors who are not necessarily pro-European.

As already highlighted, following the rapid deployment of the mission, the first months of the EUMM's operations could almost be defined as a test of planning and organisational capacities.

What was really important, at this stage, was to make the mission and the monitoring staff (and, of course, the institutional image of the EU) very visible and easily identifiable by the locals. (EUMM, 2008) Interviews held with EU institutions' staff reassert the centrality in EU minds to create a close connection between the Mission, civilians, and local actors<sup>22</sup>. The necessity for the Organisation not to be perceived as an alien force on the ground rested on the idea that the EU approaches matters of conflict resolution in a manner that promotes dialogue instead of imposing arbitrary norms via the use of force. However, in order to establish this dialogue, the institutional presence of the Organisation on the ground needs to be perceived as legitimate and accessible by local entities.

This is why the headquarters of the monitoring mission were four: one was set up in Tbilisi and three regional offices in Mtskheta, Gori and Zugdidi. (Freire and Simao, 2013). Interestingly enough, initially one of these regional offices was established in Poti, by the Black Sea, where the Russian were quite active and Mtskheta, outside the

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with former EUMM staff, June 2018

<sup>22</sup> Interview with former EUMM staff and European Commission, 2018

capital, became the actual headquarter due to the easiest context it provided for initiating patrolling activities. (Freire and Simao, 2013)

As explained by mission sources<sup>23</sup> and also has found in the literature, the regional offices main strengths are the presence of teams working on confidence-building along the ABL, and monitoring compliance with the Memoranda of Understanding signed between the Mission and the Georgian Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs (January 2009, amended in July 2010). As pointed out by the EUMM and the EEAS (in 2008 and in 2018 for the tenth anniversary of the deployment of the monitoring mission), the monitors in each Field Office are split into three specialised teams covering: 1. The Administrative Boundary Lines and the areas adjacent to them, monitoring issues pertaining to stabilisation, normalisation and confidence-building; 2. Compliance with the Agreements signed between the Mission and the Georgian Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs as well as the State Security Services of Georgia; 3. Human Security Aspects of conflict management. The implementation of the Mandate is governed by three agreements between the EUMM and the Georgian government, however, only two of these will be taken in consideration in this Chapter because they were signed during the first year of the mission which is the main object of investigation of both case studies of the thesis: 1. The Provisional Arrangement for the Exchange of Information signed between the EUMM and the Georgian Ministry of Defence in January 2009, and amended in July 2010, (as already mentioned in the above) limits the Georgian Armed Forces' positioning of troops and heavy equipment in the areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL). This unilateral pledge made by the Georgian government contributes to security and stability on the ground as well as substantiating its commitment to the principle of non-use of force,

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with former EUMM staff, June 2018

as contained in the Six-Point Agreement. Security would be further enhanced, if reciprocating measures were introduced and a reciprocal pledge made by the Russian Federation; 2. The Technical Arrangements signed between the EUMM and the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs in October 2008 introduces a degree of transparency and imposes restrictions on the equipment used and the activities performed by the Georgian Police Forces in the areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines. Security would be further enhanced, if this unilateral Georgian commitment and restrictive measures were reciprocated by the security structures of the Russian Federation.<sup>24</sup> (EUMM, 2018)

The mission has aimed to work with all parties to prevent any return to armed conflict, as well as to help make the areas adjacent to the South Ossetian and Abkhazian Administrative Boundary Lines safe and secure for the local population. However, as it has been observed by many observers in academia (Freire et al. 2013, 2015; Whitman and Wolff, 2010, 2012) and in the media (for example, Adrian Blomfield for the Telegraph in August 2009) this has been partially fulfilled during the first year of the mission considering the limited access to the breakaway regions and Russia's role between them. Nonetheless, the Mission wanted 'to contribute to the freedom of movement of citizens who live close to the Administrative Boundary Lines so that they can go about their daily lives without fear and obstacles' (EUMM, 2018) and this was supported by the member states. For example, just a few months before the Brexit

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<sup>24</sup> As pointed out, the third agreement was signed after the first year of operation of the mission. But in order to provide a complete picture of the implementation put in place by the mission, the author would like to include it as a reference of the progress after the first year. 'The Technical Agreement signed between the EUMM and the State Security Services of Georgia (SSSG) in November 2015 provides the EUMM with privileges to monitor the SSSG structures and personnel in the areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines, thus increasing transparency of the SSSG activities. Similarly to the agreement with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it contains a unilateral pledge by the Georgian government to impose restrictions on the activities and equipment of the SSSG in the areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines'. (EUMM, 2018)

referendum, the United Kingdom, proceeding to an annual review of documents highlighted once again the solidity of the Mission's mandate and the reasonability of the budget. (European Scrutiny Committee, 2015) but still pointing out the importance to keep pushing the authorities of both secessionist regions to allow the access to their territories.

'On a daily basis, 15 to 20 patrol teams get around the ABL, shifting times and itineraries to assure better monitoring'. (Freire and Simao, 2013) However, it can be argued that the monitoring capacity was still to be considered limited because the monitoring activities did (and still do) happen along the ABL but on the Georgian side. As a consequence, the normalisation of the situation was still far to be reached which meant a limitation of the security and, most of all, a very limited knowledge of the conditions of the people living on the other side of the ABL<sup>25</sup>.

However, there is still one actor remaining the protagonist in these events when mentioning Abkhazia and South Ossetia and it is Russia: 'central to the whole activity of the mission as well as regarding the efforts to politically find a solution to the undefined situation of (un)recognition of [the breakaway regions], and how they might be (or not) a part of the Georgian territory in a future settlement. (Freire and Simao, 2013)

Less than six months after the start of the EUMM, in February 2009, in Geneva, Ambassador Charalampos Christopoulos, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in Office, Ambassador Johan Verbeke of the UN and Ambassador Pierre Morel, the former EUSR for the conflicts in Georgia, finally agreed on the definition of mechanisms to facilitate the process of negotiations and finding a political agreement

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with EU Council staff, Brussels, September 2018



(OSCE Press Release, 2009; Freire and Simao, 2013). The mechanisms agreed included the creation of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), a forum to discuss any incidents, fostering transparency and trust building, which was supposed to involve participants from the EUMM, the UN, the OSCE, Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Also, along with the IPRM there is a “Hotline” telephone system which has proven very useful for participants to quickly establish a common understanding of events surrounding specific incidents and it has repeatedly helped to de-escalate possible tensions. Thanks to its extensive presence on the ground, the EUMM has improved the capacity to gather regular and timely information on the situation. Where appropriate, this information is passed on to the relevant local, national and international bodies responsible for providing adequate assistance. (EUMM, 2012, 2018; Freire and Simao, 2013).

In August 2009, in occasion of the first anniversary of the conflict, Georgia was again interesting on the news and generally in the media which investigated one more time, the presence of Russia in the separatist regions and the activities of the monitoring mission. In an interview with Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (2008), during a visit in Sukhumi, capital of the separatist Abkhazia, the EUSR Peter Semneby (2008) admitted that the mission was 'Not Quite There Yet': of course, this was an obvious reference to the EU Monitors still not fully allowed into Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In fact, he mentioned how he ‘raised the issue of the desirability of the presence of the mission on the other side of the administrative lines’ ... and how ‘there are very strong arguments for that. In that case, the mission would be able to fulfil the day-to-day liaison function that would have a calming influence in itself’. However, when asked, he did not release any comment on possible preconditions that the parties could have talked about for letting this mission on the other side of the ABL. He also pointed out

that in occasion of the anniversary, the EUMM had intensified its patrolling (EUMM Press Release, 2009) ‘to monitor the situation on the ground, with the aim of maintaining security and stability for the people who live on both sides of the boundary lines’. He stated that ‘a lot of the events that are alleged to have taken place are either very minor incidents or may not have taken place at all. So, [there is a] discrepancy between what [we] hear in terms of statements and allegations on the one hand and the actual situation on the ground. This is very important for the EUMM to be able to make such a conclusion. This is really what the observation mission is there for – to make sure that the information is available on the real situation, to calm down the situation, and to act as a deterring influence also by its very presence in this area’, and finally, the EUSR reminded that ‘the correct place to raise issues of concern or alleged incidents is through the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) and its associated hotline system. [The EUMM] stand(s) ready to facilitate further meetings between the parties as necessary and [was] also willing to examine further evidence if given access across the administrative boundary lines to do so’. (Semneby, 2008).

## **5. Conclusions**

This chapter was moved by an attempt to interrogate the major strategies that the EU, as an international normative actor, implemented in the resolution of the Georgian conflict. Furthermore, the aim of the Chapter was also to inquire into the responses that such policies had, as well as their outputs in the first 12 to 18 months of the intervention.

The chapter has identified four major strategies that the Union adopted in terms of foreign policy to pacify the Georgian conflict. First, the EU attempted at mobilising

local NGOs in order to be more proactive in the responses to an eventual escalation. Second, through the framework provided by the ENP, the EU has tried to influence decision-making processes within the Georgian political elite to restrain from engaging in open war with Russia. Third, the organisation has provided financial aid as an incentive for the Georgian government to cooperate with it, and to create a more stable space for intersubjective discussion in the conflict. Fourth, through the EUMM mission, the EU has attempted in practice to establish a presence on the field to avoid quests for territoriality.

In terms of NGO's mobilisation, the EU has obtained mixed results. While it is undeniable that this approach did not capture a growing expansionist Russia distrustful of the European aspirations of Georgia, it is also true that NGOs provided with a first "red-light" that signalled the escalation of hostilities and alerted not only the Union, but the international sphere as a whole. The Russian progressive perception of the EU as a competitor in the region has however greatly crippled the Union's ability to create a space for dialogue. Furthermore, the lack of vertical coherence, and the interests of single member states, have also impeded the Union from having a greater impact on the field.

Having said that, there are a few points of progress that need to be mentioned in relation to the EU's advancements in these fields. First, the adoption of the ceasefire agreement was not followed by major incidents among warring parties. And this can already be considered a great achievement. This sustains the idea that in the minds of EU policy makers the creation of a situation of relative stability is a necessary precondition for the establishment of a safe space for dialogue among the different

parties involved in the conflict<sup>26</sup>. This needs to be read in contingency with a specific theoretical advancement of liberal-institutionalism, that those structures that fuel conflict do not have to be taken for granted but can be altered for the benefit of all parties involved in the conflicts. And these benefits are the practical manifestation of the liberal-institutionalist idea of absolute gains. Second, all actors involved in the conflict constantly referred to the EU as an important player in the pacification of the conflict, *de facto* recognising it as an international actor worth considering. Third, despite the discrepancies among member states, the EU still formulated policies that aimed principally at promoting the values and norms that the EU stands for. While recognising the differences that underpinned member states in the formulation of options for the creation and the development of the EU monitoring mission in Georgia, the interviews have stressed the fact that, eventually, also the most vocal discrepancies were mitigated through extensive internal debates within the Organisation<sup>27</sup>. Or, to be more specific, the member states agreed to act in agreement with the Union's main objectives, namely to alleviate the suffering of the population, to promote economic rehabilitation, and to promote dialogue between the conflict parties.(Coppieters, 2007) And this signals the normative dimension of the EU, as well as adding to its credibility as a foreign policy actor.

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<sup>26</sup> The importance of stability (territorial, economic and political) has emerged during several conversations held with EU officials that have worked on the Georgian case, 2018

<sup>27</sup> Interviews with EEAS and European Commission staff, September 2018



## **Chapter Four – The EU in Ukraine: the case of the European Union Advisory Mission (2014)**

### **1. Introduction**

This Chapter has been envisioned by the author to conduct the analysis as it happens in the previous one. This system tries to facilitate the comparative process between the two case studies. The Chapter is structured in four sections. The first one is dedicated to the outline of the background of the situation in Ukraine, beginning from the realisation that the roots of the tension that manifested in full force in 2014 can be traced back to the Orange Revolution of 2004. (Ross Smith, 2015: 525-528; Wilson, 2005: 174; Wilson, 2014: 35-38; McFaul, 2007: 47-48) The second looks specifically at the nature of the Ukrainian conflict, which (as observed in the previous chapter) has the characteristics of the hybrid strategy that has recently characterised Russian approaches to warfare. The third section analyses the actions of the EU in contingency with the emergence of narratives from Ukrainian and Russian authorities on the role of the organisation in the conflict. It also argues that despite the internal disagreements among state members of the EU, it was still possible to articulate a mission in all its complexities: even if different in nature from the Georgian one but not less important. The third part of the Chapter deals closely with an analysis of the factual outcomes of the mission. And as such focuses especially on understanding the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on its citizens; as well as its relation to the reform initiatives started in the country since the establishment of the EUAM in December 2014 and its first year on the field. (EUAM, 2017) In particular, this section aims to provide an assessment of the main positive and negatives actions. The analysis has

been conducted by looking at the contribution in the literature; the role of the media and interviews conducted by the author with activists, international journalists, contract officers and Administrators of the European External Action Service, European Parliament and Advisers of the European Commission.

The conclusions of this Chapter reassert the fact that the EU has acted and has been perceived as a global security actor during the situation in Ukraine, despite certain marked distinctions with the Georgian situation.

However, the EU's ability to have more impact on Ukraine has been halted at times by two important factors: first, as in Georgia, the EU lacked vertical coherence. Specifically, different member states of the Union have projected different interests towards the Ukrainian situation. Second, a growing tension with Russia (inside and outside Ukraine) has stopped the EU from being able fully to engage with all the actors involved in the conflict. However, the chapter argues, that given the situation in the eastern part of the country and its importance for the stability of Europe (especially the eastern border) the EU still remains the best option to deliver on the prospects of peace in the country.

This serves as a basis to associate the two cases. This exercise has the main scope of providing the rationale for conducting a further moment of comparison that unfolds in Chapter 5, when the thesis contrasts the two cases: the EU interventions in Georgia and Ukraine.

## **2. The Background of the Ukrainian Situation and the Growing Russian Influence: from 1991 to 2014**

In light of the international developments of post-Cold War Europe, there is little denying that a crisis of the magnitude of the Ukrainian one poses a direct challenge to the notions of liberal peace that propagated during the time of American hegemony. In August 1991, following an attempted coup in Moscow, the Ukrainian parliament declared its independence from the USSR. Following these events, a nationwide referendum was called on the matter the following December and 90% voted for independence. (Wilson, 1993: 694-695; Kuzio, 1997: 1-2; Solchanyk, 1994: 47-48).

However, almost ten years later, in September of 2000, the relationship between the EU and Ukraine started to get worse. In fact, following the kidnapping and murder of the journalist Georgiy Gongadze, the EU called for an inquiry, but the then president Leonid Kuchma simply denied all allegations. (Karatnycky, 2005: 40; Kubicek, 2005: 279; Kuzio, 2005: 29) It seems evident from this excerpt that the worsening of the relationship between the EU and Ukraine has constantly been a core problem that the Organisation faced at least, since the early 2000s. This is easily explainable by the proximity of the country with the EU, and by its relational proximity with Russia. In fact, since the End of the Cold War, one of the major focal points of the Organisation's normative impetus had been to create stable relationships in its neighbourhood, and with former Soviet states this has improved since the enlargement of 2004. This, ideally, would have minimised the possibility of escalation of conflicts on European soil. However, the worsening of this relationship was to have major implications for European order for decades.



Later on, in a changed political scenario, in April 2001, President Yushchenko was dismissed by a no-confidence vote in the Parliament. (Arel, 2001: 55; Kuzio, 2005: 29) Despite being extremely popular in the Western political scenario, Yushchenko's popularity within Ukraine was, however, not as high. (Kuzio, 2005: 29-30) But, admittedly, the year 2002 was a turning point for the worst in Ukrainian politics, with a turn of Parliamentary elections that has been considered, 'by nearly half of Ukrainian experts [as being plagued by] election fraud.' (Sushko and Prystayko, 2010: 576) In March of the same year, corruption accusations galvanised the opposition to the rule of President Kuchma, and in September mass protests started in the country demanding his immediate resignation. (Wolczuk, 2003: 11; Dyczok, 2006: 224-225)

These tensions between Kuchma's government and the Ukrainian population were to characterise the political environment of the country until the Presidential elections of 2004. This round of elections has been considered incredibly controversial because, on one side, the official count of votes indicated Yanukovych as the clear winner. On the other side, however, Western observers reported widespread electoral fraud. As a consequence, the opposition candidate, Yushchenko, launched an open campaign of civil disobedience to manifest against the rigging of the elections. (D'Anieri, 2005: 237) As a result, the Supreme Court annulled the elections and Yushchenko topped the polls in the election re-run. The rival candidate, Viktor Yanukovych, challenged the results but decided to resign as Prime Minister. (BBC, 2004)

It seems evident from the literature and the conversations with EU officials that have been working with topics related to corruption and civilian security strategies

in Ukraine that the issue of fair elections and the transparency of the political process were two nodal ones<sup>28</sup>. This is naturally explainable in light of what has been theoretically advanced in Chapter 1. In fact, in contingency with liberal-institutionalism, the idea of democracy promotion constituted one of the major normative underpinnings of the European project. This is because democracies tend not to wage war one against the other. As such, the construction of a stable European environment had to go through the promotion of democracy, in the idea of EU policy makers.

In January 2005, Yushchenko sworn in as President, just after the Supreme Court rejected the challenge proposed by the losing candidate. In February of the same year, the President's nominee, Yulia Tymoshenko, was appointed as Prime Minister by the Parliament. However, this moment of conjunction was not to last too long but just until September 2005, when President Yushchenko dismissed Yulia Tymoshenko. The Parliament then approved Yuri Yekhanurov as her successor. (Lansford, 2014: 1492) Just a few months before, the Orange Revolution pledged a change towards real democratisation and it raised expectations of a new start for the EU-Ukraine relations, but this hope was undermined by a very limited actual change: a promise of free and fair elections and a free press, but worsening corruption and the failure of judicial reform. (Pridham, 2014) During the following months, Russia entered preponderantly as a principal actor in fuelling the tensions. First of all, in January 2006, Russia cut Ukraine gas supplies. (BBC, 2006) During the summer, those political leaders who mostly supported the Orange Revolution back in 2004 (the Yushchenko and Tymoshenko blocs and the Socialists) formed the “agree coalition”. (BBC, 2006) The deal only lasted until the Socialists decided

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<sup>28</sup> Conversations with European Parliament officials, September 2018

to join Yanukovych's Party of Regions and the Communists. Later, in August, faced with a deadline to accept Viktor Yanukovych's nomination or call new elections, President Yushchenko agreed that his rival would become Prime Minister. (The Guardian, 2007) In 2007, two events reaffirmed the Russian influence on the Ukrainian political environment: in February, Boris Tarasyuk, a close ally of the president and a strong advocate of strong ties with Europe and NATO, resigned as Minister of Foreign Affairs; (Oxford Business Group, 2007: 14-15) while in September, at the Parliamentary elections there was not a clear winner but the pro-Russian parties were able to join together and form an unstable majority. (Copsey, 2008: 306).

While these events were changing the face of Ukrainian politics, the rest of the world was on the verge of the global economic crisis that started with the collapse of Lehman Brothers. (Wilson, 2014: 2) A few months after the Ukrainian Parliamentary elections, in May 2008, in Russia, Putin ceded the Presidency to Dmitriy Medvedev, just four months before the clash between Russia and Georgia. This brief paragraph has highlighted how, in the period between 2002 and 2007, Russia found fertile ground in the chaotic political environment in Ukraine to progressively establish its presence. This, on one side, fuelled tensions with Ukrainian nationalists. On the other, galvanised the tensions between the pro-NATO political factions in the country and the Russian government, clearly hostile to this development.

The next section will show how this rationale was to dominate from 2008 until the 2013 crisis. With the elections of 2010, Yanukovich became the democratically elected President, winning 49% of the vote. But on the other side, the Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko, defeated with 45.5% of the vote, refused to accept the

electoral results and alleged frauds. In an interesting turn of events, however, Tymoshenko, was arrested for abuse of powers and eventually jailed (The Guardian, 2011). The EU issued an official statement to condemn the verdict, declaring that Kiev's handling of the case "risked deep implications for its hopes of EU integration." (Telegraph, 2011) EU foreign policy Chief, HR-VP Catherine Ashton declared in a statement that the verdict showed how 'justice was being applied selectively in politically motivated prosecutions'. (EEAS, 2012) The strong western reactions urged for the Ukrainian Supreme Court to reclassify Tymoshenko's charges as administrative and not criminal. (BBC, 2011) Interestingly, Western political leaders and the Russian president Vladimir Putin stood on the same side in 2011, when he famously declared that he did not understand the reasons for Tymoshenko's jailing. (Robertson, 2014) This general and somehow schematic overview of the events that mainly characterised Ukrainian politics since 2008 serves the purpose of understanding how western and Russian influences started dominating the political sphere even before the escalation of violence of 2013.

By the end of 2013, it is well known how protests revamped in Ukraine, with President Yanukovich's cabinet leaving the consultations to close an agreement on closer trade ties with EU. This signalled the President's intention to seek instead a closer partnership with Russia. (Kudelia, 2014: 19-20; Onuch, 2014: 45) The government quickly released a statement announcing that the decision had been taken to protect Ukraine's "national security" and having only the country's interests at heart. (Yanukovich, 2013) At this point, the EU was aware of the growing geopolitical importance of Ukraine but still insisting on essential political

conditions being satisfied, especially over ‘selective justice’ (as defined by Catherine Ashton) and the release of Yulia Tymoshenko.

However, these considerations were already been analysed before the Association Agreement could be signed, for example, in June 2013, David O’Sullivan, chief operating officer of the European External Action Service (EEAS), asserted that the Association Agreement would not be signed considering just geopolitical factors (Pridham, 2014) but already by August, Ashton stated that the EU was not in the position to lose Ukraine but her reflections, on the matter of reform and later on the conflict, were not going to have a timely impact<sup>29</sup>.

Also, some of the new member states from post-Soviet bloc were pushing for an Association Agreement exactly for geopolitical reasons. There was an increasing tension at this point between the specific demands of conditionality and the broad concerns of EU geostrategic interests. Only three months later, in February 2014, after a bloodbath in Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the main square of Kiev, as a result of the protests, President Yanukovich decided to flee to Russia, giving the opposition a big opportunity to take over the country. In March, it is well known by now that “little green men” (as called by Pinkham in an article for The Guardian) in military gear without insignia converged on Crimea: Ukrainian troops on the peninsula had been contained or won over, Crimean politicians had been induced to dissolve the Parliament and replace the Prime Minister with a member of Crimea’s Russian Unity party, and the region had been “reunited” with Russia through an outstanding victory of 97% at the referendum. According to CFR Adjunct Senior Fellow John Bellinger (2014), former Legal Adviser for the U.S. State Department,

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with European Commission staff, September 2018. The author agrees with these observations considering that, at the EUSA conference in Boston, USA, in 2015, Catherine Ashton stated that the Russian intervention in Ukraine was unexpected.

the March 16th referendum violated both the Ukrainian Constitution and general principles of international law, which respect the territorial integrity of states (CFR, 2014). The annexation of Crimea, echoed an east-west divide that propagated since the Cold War, as the section above indicated.

According to Pridham (2014), there were two issues that could lead the EU to face again a conflictual situation with Russia. Firstly, in contrast with what happened in Georgia, the member states seemed quite divided on the question of the economic sanctions. Geographically, this could be understood in a sort of North versus South divide: in fact, member states that were under the Soviet sphere of influence, like the Baltic countries and Poland, were obviously keener to take a harder stance on the matter, while others, like the Mediterranean region and Hungary and Bulgaria had generally a “softer” opinion. Germany’s position was actually very interesting because, even if it was playing a quite a strong role among the member states, was actually suffering strong pressure from companies trading with Russia. The western dependence on Russian gas was a fundamental factor that determined the ‘conflict between political values over the threat to European security and economic interests’. What, unfortunately brought Europe closer was the tragic ‘MH17 disaster which overcame reluctance to act against Russia’. (Pridham, 2014) In particular, the latter has upset rough balance among the EU member states and prompted a number of them to reassess their approaches to Russia. (House of Lords, 2015: 61) Secondly, the EU member states had to face the idea ‘different system of governance under Putin’, that could mean moving away ‘the post-Cold War belief that geopolitics was grounded in collective respect for rules and international law’. (Pridham, 2014)

Again, attempts to establish a new framework were ongoing from 2008 until March 2014 (halted by Russia's annexation of Crimea), the protracted negotiations reflecting different ideas about how the relationship should move forward. What is particularly striking here is that theoretical assumptions about the effects of an institutionalised relationship, such as that established by the PCA, have proven to be overly optimistic. This is supported by this excerpt, that stresses the fact that the EU might have underestimated the interests of the Ukrainian government to establish a closer relationship with Russia (and especially, President Putin)<sup>30</sup>. This assessment needs also to be understood in terms of competing incentives that the Ukrainian government could opt for. Those coming from the EU, and those coming from Russia. As already noted the ability of the EU to persuade the Russian government to sit at the diplomatic table was one of the most crucial and challenging aspects for policy makers. In the absence of such a dialogic moment, the receiving end (the Ukrainian government) could raise the stakes tremendously.

In fact, despite six monthly summits and a regularised framework for meetings between ministers and other officials, a wide gap remains between the EU and Russia. From the EU perspective, this is of Russia's making. A second point to improve relates to the differences between EU member states that have made the construction of a single EU foreign policy a difficult task to accomplish. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in respect of Russia. Estonia, Lithuania and Poland, for example, have been relatively disregarded, in the greater interest of treating Russia as a strategic partner and not allowing personal bias to interfere in that process. In assuming any actor could be wholly rational and objective in its decision-making, the EU has not managed to harness effectively the range of

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<sup>30</sup> Conversations with European Commission and European Parliament officials, September 2018.

members' perspectives to agree an optimal Russia policy. Thirdly, there is the matter of Russia's mistrust of EU motivations and intentions, especially as a result of continued enlargement and the European Neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership policies (ENP and EaP). Russia's fears could best be allayed by a drawing of clear boundaries around the EU, a clear and unambiguous declaration that the EU had expanded as far as possible.

At a more normative level, the EU would be justifiably criticised for elevating Russia's concerns about dealings with separate sovereign states above the rights of those same sovereign states. This would mean to undermine all that the EU is supposed to be and to represent. Of course, in many ways, the ENP and EaP are precisely the signifiers of the EU boundaries, probably even the consolation prize for those the EU does not anticipate welcoming as members. But as ever, perceptions do matter and Russia and many countries part of the ENP and the EaP do not necessarily see partnership in these policies as exclusionary clauses in respect of eventual EU membership. Finally, Brussels has not captured the depths of Russia's perceptions of the EU, its suspicions, and the possible consequences of those.

## *2.1 The nature of the conflict*

The Ukrainian conflict, when compared to the purely intra-state dimension of Georgia, was of a different nature. Many scholars have in fact described it as a hybrid war. (Freedman, 2014; Galeotti, 2016; Kofman and Rojansky, 2015; Lanoszka, 2016) According to most analysts, the ways in which Russia intervened in the situation has



been much more subtle than open conflict, and yet added an international dimension to it. Lanoszka argued that “Russia did not launch a traditional invasion to wrest Crimea away from Kiev’s control; instead, it fomented local pro-Russian demonstrations, inserted unmarked militia groups (‘little green men’) to occupy official government buildings, and oversaw a local referendum to lend an air of legitimacy to the annexation effort”. (Lanoszka, 2016: 175) Kofman and Rojansky claim that hybrid wars are nothing new, while at the same time necessitate a re-thinking of the strategies to pacify them. (Kofman and Rojansky, 2015: 2) Similarly, Freedman observed that the first appearance of such conflicts in modern times occurred in the Korean war of 1950-1953. (Freedman, 2014: 8) The term gained popularity during the 2006 Lebanon War when Hizbollah surprised Israel through unconventional tactics of warfare. (Freedman, 2014: 9)

Descriptively Glenn argues that a hybrid war is characterised by any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a tailored mix of conventional, irregular, terrorism and criminal means or activities in the operational battlespace. Rather than a single entity, a hybrid threat or challenger may be comprised of a combination of state and non-state actors. (Glenn, 2009)

Galeotti unpacks this definition even more by asserting that the distinctiveness appears not so much in essence, but in degree. States always tend to assert the primacy of the political, even while in practice they often get bogged down in the cruder metrics of war – casualty ratios, how far the front line is moved, how many raids have been launched – or emotional red lines and matters of honour. (Galeotti, 2016: 291) He further claims that the distinctiveness in the degree of engagement was particularly evident in Ukraine in three aspects: information warfare, the use of non-state actors, and the closer coordination between political and military operations. (Galeotti, 2016:

291–293) So, the annexation of Crimea and the escalation in Donbass constituted a hybrid warfare because “[they] began as a covert military operation, combining ambiguity, disinformation, and the element of surprise at the operational level with more traditional aids such as electronic warfare. The annexation was completed by a traditional military invasion and occupation of the peninsula, using Russia’s airborne, naval infantry, and motor rifle brigades.”(Kofman and Rojansky, 2015: 3)

In the case of Donbass, on the other hand, “the purpose was to put pressure on Kiev to force it to acknowledge Moscow’s regional hegemony, something the Russians appear to have assumed was assured within a few months. Thus, if in Crimea the aim was to create a new order, in the Donbass it was as much as anything else to create chaos, even if a controlled, weaponised chaos.”(Galeotti, 2016: 285)

As happened for Georgia, the tactics deployed through the application of the Gerasimov doctrine pose serious questions to any attempt to pacify the conflict. In fact, the continuous blurring of the fault line between who is a civilian and who is a military creates a tremendous difficulty in identifying who is leading the warring phenomenon. This is translated in enormous complexities at establishing a dialogue among warring parties. Furthermore, the involvement of Russia in Ukraine was not immediately recognised by Russian authorities, *de facto* limiting the initial prospects of including Russia as an actor in conflict resolution. Lastly, the psychological dimension of hybrid warfare translates into the idea that Russia was able to create an environment not permeable to EU staff. By infusing the conflict with anti-EU narratives, in other terms, Russia was able to exacerbate those historical tensions that characterised the relationship between the EU and Ukraine. And this, in turn, scattered the legitimacy of the EU among members of the Ukrainian political elite.

However, as already noted, it is precisely the hybrid nature of these conflicts that leads authors like Lanoszka to claim that military solutions are ill equipped as conflict resolution approaches to solve hybrid wars. (Lanoszka, 2016: 177) Freedman goes even further by claiming that any forceful intervention in the contexts of hybrid wars is likely to strengthen the stronger side of the conflict and create an even more unbalanced situation. (Freedman, 2014: 20) For this reason the EU foreign policy approach to conflict resolution, which rests on non-coercive means, although riddled with problems, might still be the best shot that international actors have in the pursuit of peace in Ukraine.

### **3. The EU's engagement - Response to the 2014 Ukrainian Conflict: the Understated Contributions in response to the Maidan revolution and to the Resolution of the Conflict**

As already highlighted in Chapter 3, when analysing the impact of the EU preparations and responses in Ukraine, it is necessary to recall the three components of conflict resolution outlined in Chapter 1. As happened for the case of Georgia, the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was founded on the desire from both parties to establish a new stage in their relationship based on reciprocity and interdependence that aims, among the other issues, at tackling the problem of intrastate violence. This is particularly evident by looking at the preamble of the Agreement that among its primary objectives has:

- (b) to provide an appropriate framework for enhanced political dialogue in all areas of mutual interest;

(c) to promote, preserve and strengthen peace and stability in the regional and international dimensions in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, and of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the objectives of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990;

(e) to enhance cooperation in the field of Justice, Freedom and Security with the aim of reinforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(f) to establish conditions for increasingly close cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. (EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, 2014)

More specifically, the section outlining Aims of Political Dialogue stresses the importance of the EU-Ukrainian partnership

(b) to promote international stability and security based on effective multilateralism;

(c) to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between the Parties on international security and crisis management, particularly in order to address global and regional challenges and key threats;

(d) to foster result-oriented and practical cooperation between the Parties for achieving peace, security and stability on the European continent;

(e) to strengthen respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, non-discrimination of persons belonging

to minorities and respect for diversity, and to contribute to consolidating domestic political reforms (EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, 2014)

The focus on internal and international stability is particularly interesting in light of the situation in Georgia described in Chapter 3. The Association Agreement was finalised at the end of June 2014 but the political chapters had already been signed back in March ‘as a gesture of support for the country in its conflict with Russia following the annexation of Crimea’. (Pridham, 2014) This event has been considered of crucial importance because it cancelled the decision of the (then) President Yanukovich not to sign the Association Agreement at the Vilnius summit in 2013.

However, the response of the EU to the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis was different than its response to the Georgian one. This section aims at showing that, despite differences within the organisation on how to proceed, the EU was still able to put in place a complex mission based in Kiev and be part (through the presence of France and Germany) to the meetings in Minsk to try as much as possible to solve the crisis. While the events in Kiev were tragically developing, the EU has been actually criticised by the international press, the US and some of the protesters, carrying signs asking “Europe where are you?”, for lack of boldness and even accused of being very slow in its response to the crisis. (Pridham, 2014) Particularly as the demonstrations in November 2013 began as a protest against Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement. In the eyes of public opinion and, generally, for the international scenario, the EU’s actions and procedures were not fast enough to match the situation in Kiev, despite the of diplomatic activity with regular visits in Ukraine by the Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle and the EU HR-VP Catherine Ashton. However, it has to be highlighted that during their 30 visits to Ukraine, Füle and his team of advisers warned the local authorities about how the situation would

escalate for the worse very quickly<sup>31</sup> (even two days before the actual violence started), but the response was a (possibly naïve) underestimation of the whole protest. Moreover, authorities from member states like Poland and Germany were actually present in Maidan during the protests because they believed in the opportunity to actually reform the country<sup>32</sup>.

The Ukrainian events, that started with the protests in Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev at the end of 2013 and culminated in February 2014 with President Yanukovich fleeing the country, can be seen as an actual struggle for early warning mechanisms. However, Yanukovich's replacement by an interim pro-EU government led to two different outcomes: on the European side, it re-opened the way for a 'concrete supportive action by Brussels in conjunction with other international organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'. (Pridham, 2014)

On the Russian side, the Parliament approved President Vladimir Putin's request to use force to protect Russia's interests in Ukraine. Three days later, Putin 'emphasized that Russia would retain the right to use all available means to protect the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine's eastern and southern regions'. (Novaky, 2015)

To avoid a further escalation of the situation, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) began to discuss the deployment of a monitoring mission to Ukraine, while in March, American Ambassador Daniel B. Baer called 'for OSCE observers to be sent immediately to Ukraine'. According to him, the mission would

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with European Commission staff, former Adviser of the Enlargement Commissioner Füle, Brussels, September 2018

<sup>32</sup> Interview with European Commission staff, September 2018

‘monitor and prevent conflict; ensure the protection of human rights of members of minorities; prevent border conflict; promote respect for territorial integrity; and to maintain peace, stability and security in the region’. (Novaky, 2015)

According to this statement (and the literature), it seems clear that the idea of a mission was heatedly debated within the EU<sup>33</sup>. This is because many members states (just like it happened in the case of Georgia) were perfectly aware of the fact that this would not have eased the inclusion of Russia at the diplomatic table, while at the same time it could have created problems of legitimacy for the EU in the eyes of the Ukrainian government. However, the decision was taken because it was seen as a necessary precondition for diplomatic dialogue. In this sense, the implementation of a mission on the Ukrainian territory has to be read in contingency with the idea expressed by liberal-institutionalists that diplomatic dialogue for the creation for a peaceful environment is easier to achieve in situations of crystallised conflicts.

Naturally, Russia was among the 57 members that had to approve unanimously the deployment of an OSCE monitoring mission. Considering the delicate situation, Russia supported the mission officially, but kept obstructing it by seeking additional information and asking for clarifications about its mandate. (Novaky, 2015)

At this point, the possibility for the EU to actually deploy a CSDP mission was seriously discussed at a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Estonia. The Swedish Minister highlighted the urgency to act and, after this meeting, both British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President François Hollande expressed the necessity to act quickly in order to guarantee fair and transparent elections under international control. The United Nations (UN) also deployed a human rights monitoring mission

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with European Commission staff, September 2018

to the country in March, which issued its first report in May but the ‘ability to deal with the situation in Ukraine was constrained by Russia's veto power in the UN Security Council’. (Novaky, 2015) And, also the EU was facing clear limits to what it could actually provide because, as already seen, the majority of its member states were unwilling to do anything that would put them in a difficult position with the Kremlin. This situation has highlighted even more the necessity of the EU to achieve vertical coherence. In fact, the conversations and interviewes with EU officials have brought to light the notion that there were definitely exogenous factors that initially tried to jeopardise the EU mission in Ukraine, but endogenous ones played a role as well<sup>34</sup>. The discrepancies among member-states on the prioritisation of conflict resolution in Ukraine over their relationships with Russia was to prove one of the major cruxes of the Organisation’s involvement in Ukraine. The notion of vertical coherence needs to be understood not merely in theoretical terms but also practically. Multiple voices within the same Organisation mean that the EU is not perceived as a single entity but a multiplicity of state actors with different ideas about and interests in the region. For local actors and warring parties, this translates into the possibility of negotiating with single member states or disregarding the policies of the Union if they openly challenge the opinions of its most powerful members. Moreover, about the possibility to have a CSDP mission in Ukraine, Russia's main interest was to ensure that it would ‘not be used to strengthen the military potential of the Ukrainian armed forces to suppress Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine’. (Novaky, 2015)

But how did this start in the first place? Just as for the case of Georgia, the aspiration to become part of NATO declared at the Bucharest summit in April 2008, was not at all welcomed by Russia. (Klussmann, 2008; Oliphant, 2015) And, as explained in

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, September 2018



Chapter 3, what happened in Georgia in August was aimed at punishing Georgia for its NATO ambitions but, also, to warn others, especially Ukraine, not to go along the same path (Kakabadze, 2008; Harding and Meikle, 2008; Merkel, 2014)

However, the difference between the Georgian and Ukrainian situation, as this section indicates, is that in Ukraine early warnings emerged as early as 2008 (interestingly, once again, in contingency with the escalation of the Georgian conflict) and in 2009 with the launch of the EaP which promised to promote democracy and good governance; strengthen energy security; promote sector reform. Regardless of this, a mixture of hostility and disinterest for the country, led these warnings to go unheard. Early warning mechanisms were not sufficient to help the EU in the approach to the Ukrainian situation, one of the major concerns for the Georgian conflict, suffered from similar issues in the Ukrainian case as well. To cite Nikolas Gvosdev, the presumption is that ‘...a proactive policy could have tamped down the crisis long ago and for a lower price’. (“The Deep Policy Failures That Led to Ukraine | The National Interest,” 2014)

Gvosdev specifically addresses the problem actually claiming a lack of early warning mechanisms and also hints at the fact that ‘...even if early warning had been provided, [the international community] would have lacked the political tools to make much of a difference’. (“The Deep Policy Failures That Led to Ukraine | The National Interest,” 2014) And this notion seems to be of particular relevance when one considers the fact that the Early Warning Project has placed Ukraine in the top 20 countries at risk for four years in a row. (“Early Warning Project | What Does 2016 Hold for Ukraine?,” 2016)

Furthermore, unlike the situation in Georgia, the EU opted for a more proactive stance that manifested through the issuing of economic sanctions (followed by Russian

counter sanctions) to pressure Russia into talks about the future of the country. This is consistent with liberal-institutionalist dogmas on the approaches to crisis situation, in the sense that liberal- institutionalist scholars often argued that economic sanctions constitute an important tool in the shaping of states' interests. (Cox and Drury, 2006: 709–710; Lektzian and Souva, 2003: 641–642; Peksen, 2009: 63; Wallensteen, 1968)

As highlighted by this, the decision to implement stronger measures was not taken lightly. The line of reasoning there, though, was not to replicate the semi-passive stance that the EU was criticised for in the late 2000s. Ideally, the economic sanctions would have had to be coupled with more proactive approaches in the strengthening of the EU-Ukraine relationship. And this, in the minds of EU policy-makers, would have created the incentives for a more fruitful negotiation process with all the warring parties involved<sup>35</sup>.

But the EU also worked diplomatically in the construction of an Association Agreement with the government of Ukraine, and this had important implications for the construction of an intersubjective moment in which Russia and EU attempted at exerting their influence on Ukrainian politics. The difference among the two situations cannot escape the changing landscape of international politics, which has witnessed the return of Russia as a preponderant great power in world politics since the late 2000s. (Gat, 2007; Mankoff and Mankoff, 2009; Tsygankov, 2005)

As an anticipation to the next section, it has to be noted that the EUAM in Ukraine formally began its operations on 1 December 2014, following the Maidan revolution and in response to a formal invitation issued by the Ukrainian government.

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<sup>35</sup> Conversations with European Commission staff, June 2018

According to the statement of the mission, the main goal of EUAM is ‘to achieve a civilian security sector that is efficient, accountable, and enjoys the trust of the public’. (EUAM, 2014) The Mandate of the mission encompasses 200 Ukrainian and international staff that are dedicated to implement three pillars of activity:

- 1) Strategic advice on civilian security sector reform;
- 2) Support the implementation of reforms, through the delivery of hands-on advice, training, and other projects;
- 3) Cooperation and coordination, to ensure that reform is coordinated with Ukrainian and international actors. (EUAM, 2014)

From this brief description of the mandate and goals of the EUAM, two features seem to emerge. First, as happened in Georgia, the goal of the mission was to be achieved in coordination with local actors and derives from a contractual nature of the EU but also of the EUAM itself. The fact that the EU started its operations when the government of Ukraine issued a formal request should not be dismissed in terms of how legitimate the EU was in the Ukrainian situation. Also, in dissonance with the Georgian situation where the Monitoring Mission incorporated patrolling of sensitive zones of conflict, in Ukraine the EU has mainly an advisory role.

On this, at the time of EU increasing involvement in the Ukrainian situation, the European Commission (EC) issued a statement that read

The European Union has important relations with Ukraine and the Russian Federation and stands ready to engage in a frank and open dialogue with

them. It has a special responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. (European Commission, 2014)

In the same statement, a few lines below, one can read that “The European Union's and the Russian Federation's common objective of a relationship based on mutual interest and respect of international obligations needs to be promptly restored.”, and that “the solution to the crisis should be found through negotiations between the Governments of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, including through potential multilateral mechanisms.” (EC, 2014)

It seems clear from these initial statements that the EU was to act in the Ukrainian situation in coherence with its main aims that have been present in several documents since its establishment in the 1950s. The fact that the EU prioritised an advisory aspect of intervention, and that it stressed the importance of intersubjective dialogue to promote peace in Ukraine, does not mean that other, more proactive measures, were not taken. Two actions from the EU, in fact, served as complement to the EUAM: the first action was the continuations of the talks for Ukraine to formally enter the EU, which antagonised Russia; the second action was the issuing of economic sanctions against the Kremlin.

The notion that the EU attempted at constructing a more interdependent relationship with the Ukrainian government through the formalisation of their partnership is evident in a statement that was released in conjuncture with the talks about the Association Agreement. The document, labelled “Conclusions on External Relations with Ukraine and Gaza” and released in 2014, reads as follows

The European Council stresses the importance of Ukraine ratifying the Association Agreement with a view to its early provisional application. It

welcomes the holding of trilateral consultations at ministerial level between Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the European Union on 11 July on the implementation of the Association Agreement. (EC, 2014a)

Along with the diplomatic pressure exerted by the EU in the trilateral relationship with Ukraine and Russia that manifested in the continuation of talks on the Association Agreement, the EU opted to exert also economic pressure on Russia. Since March 2014 in fact, the EU opted for increasingly restrictive measures in response to the annexation of Crimea. (EEAS, 2014) These included an import ban on goods, full ban on investment and prohibition to supply tourism services, as well as banning the ‘trade of equipment for the prospection, exploration, and production of oil gas and mineral resources.’ (EEAS, 2014) These sanctions, since 2016, have been prolonged several times and are still operational a year later. (EC, 2017) In contrast, economic sanctions were not applied for the Georgian case, even though there were discussions about it<sup>36</sup>. This seems to reflect a change in the attitude of the EU towards hybrid conflicts, that goes in contingency with the continuous refinement of the Gerasimov Doctrine. In fact, the purely dialogical approach adopted by the Union in Georgia incurred in the risk of giving Russia the upper hand in the negotiation process. Furthermore, it might have added credibility to the belief that the EU could only have a marginal impact on international politics. As predicted however, this measure antagonised Russia even more and prevented “all” the actors involved in the crisis from participating in a constructive dialogue for peace<sup>37</sup>. As explained in Chapter two, this goes also against the idea that peaceful incentives work actually better than actual threatening behaviours.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with European Commission staff, September 2018

<sup>37</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, September 2018

At the beginning, the EU's initial sanctions were mostly “symbolic” (Novaky, 2015), such as suspending talks with the Russia on visa matters and the new EU–Russia Agreement as well as boycotting the G8 summit in Sochi. The annexation of Crimea was considered the first action that required a strong reaction and the EU responded issuing travel bans and asset freezes against a number of Russian and Ukrainian officials. As noted, before the annexation of Crimea the EU stance towards the Ukrainian situation was much more similar to what the Organisation opted for in Georgia. However, such a public display of force and antagonism by the Kremlin deeply questioned these considerations, and eventually led the EU to adopt a more firm stance on the matter.

Moreover, what really changed the perception not just of the EU member states representatives but also of the public opinion was the Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 shot down over Donetsk region on 17 July that killed all 298 passengers of which 211 were EU citizens (Novaky, 2015), the union finally issued more robust sanctions. Although the EU has emphasized that these sanctions are meant as a ‘positive incentive’ for finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Ukraine and not as a punishment on Russia, they are part of a coercive strategy designed to compel Russia to de-escalate the conflict. (Novaky, 2015)

There has been a lot of discussion on whether economic sanctions work or not as pressuring states into certain behaviours, both on the academic (Cox and Drury: 2006; de Jonge Oudraat: 2000; Pape: 1997) and on the policy planes. (Inozemtsev: 2015; Ulansky: 2015) On the factual side, Russia remains present in Crimea with troops. But it is also true that the conflict de-escalated preponderantly in terms of civilian deaths. And the impact of sanctions on both these dynamics is extremely difficult to assert with certainty. What, on the other hand, seems evident from the counter-sanctions

released by Russia and the discursive structures that emerged in concomitance with them, is that Russia seems to recognise the role of the EU as an international to the point that accepts to deal with it on the same level. In response to the sanctions, in fact, Putin started speaking about a renewed strategy of containment that aimed at hampering Russia's role in international politics. In one of the first speeches he gave in response to the sanctions, Putin recalled that

“For some European countries, national pride is seen as a luxury, but for Russia it is a necessity, [...] The policy of containment was not invented yesterday. It has been applied to our country for many, many years ... Every time when anyone only thinks Russia has become strong, independent, such instruments are applied immediately”. (Putin, in Walker, 2014)

Interesting to note, the Strategy of Containment described by John Lewis Gaddis as characterising certain periods during the Cold War, (Gaddis, 2005) is typically associated with the growth of American hegemony, while Putin, at least in 2014, made reference only to European countries. But this was only his first speech. In those that came after that, following US sanctions on Russia, the discursive structure slightly changed from an entire focus on European countries, to associating the EU with the US in their attempts at containing Russia. The assimilation of two actors carries important implications to understand the perceptions that these have on receiving ends. This notion has been found also in Chapter 3 of this research work to outline how the association of the EU with the US implicitly puts the two on the same level. This has happened during the Ukrainian situation as well, when Putin declared that the United States and Europe had crossed a “red line” by supporting the newly installed government that was installed after Yanukovych fled the country. (Putin, in Myers and Barry, 2014) Later, the president was even more explicit by justifying

“[...] the annexation [of Crimea] using the same arguments that the United States and Europe cited to justify the independence of Kosovo from Serbia and even quoted from the American submission to the United Nations International Court when it reviewed the matter in 2009”.(Putin, in Myers and Barry, 2014)

This is indicative of the fact that rested his legitimacy claims as an international actor or even a great power on grounds that belonged to the US and the EU, creating an implicit triad of great powers. This kind of association, where Putin speaks about “the West” as a sole voice, or explicitly compares the US and the EU, sustains the view that the EU actions are perceived as comparable to US sanctions. This kind of has been present in Putin’s speeches since 2014 until 2017, when the President recalled once more that ‘Western sanctions made Russia stronger’. (Putin, 2017) In 2017, Putin did not see the necessity of distinguishing between the EU and the US anymore, and described their actions as Western ones.

According to Novaky (2015), the EU definitely had an advantage but eventually it has struggled to deal with Russia for different reasons. Firstly, the EU is ‘neither a state nor simply a sum of its part’s, so its ‘ability to mobilize its considerable resources depends on its member states’ ability to coordinate their policies on specific issues’. With regard to Russia, as previously explained, different EU member states have different interests and policy priorities. Secondly, the EU is not the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which means it does not have the same military characteristics and, as such, it is not equipped with the type of assistance provided by Article 5 of the 1949 Washington Treaty for this case. In other words, even if some EU member states would like to provide military support to Ukraine via the union, the EU lacks capacity in this area and is not under any obligation to protect the country.



Thirdly, the EU is not officially led by a nation who could take charge during international crises, (like the USA tends to do in NATO). Fourthly, many EU member states depend on Russian energy exports, which provides Moscow with a certain amount of leverage over them. (Novaky, 2015).

Naturally, along with these kind of discursive structures, some more demeaning ones emerged in Russian politics that attempted at targeting Europe on moral grounds. The chairman of the Russian Parliament's International Affairs Committee, Alexei Pushkov, for instance in 2013 declared that Kiselyov had aired excerpts from a Swedish program called "Poop and Pee," designed to teach children about bodily functions, and declared it was an example of the kind of European depravity awaiting Ukraine if it aligns with Europe. (Keller, 2013)

On the other receiving end of the story, President Poroshenko also remarked, in more than one occasion, the importance of the role of the EU<sup>38</sup> in the management and resolution of the Ukrainian crisis. Firstly, in a speech after the signature of the Association Agreement of 2014, declaring Ukraine's closeness with the EU, and the intention to work for "its sovereign choice in favour of future membership in the EU" and pointing out that Ukrainian people had paid a very high price for the opportunity to sign the agreement; and secondly, in an official statement released in 2015, the President declared

"I highly appreciate the unwavering solidarity and unity of the European Union in support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. [...] We know what needs to be done further and we will do it in close cooperation with the European Commission". (Poroshenko, 2015)

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, Brussels, September 2018

The EU had taken the decision to be more engaged in this long-term process through different support programmes for Ukraine. While the main drive towards reforming the country had to come from inside Ukraine itself, the main role for the EU was to provide guidance during changing times. (Pridham, 2014). In very simple terms, Ukraine seemed available and receptive to change but it needed an incentive and what could be better than a membership perspective? What Ukraine most wanted at that point was moving beyond the scope of the Eastern Partnership.

This supports the idea that the Ukrainian government tactically engaged with the EU in terms of raising the stakes. In fact, by being so firmly committed to the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict, the EU exposed itself to the point that it passed from providing incentives to deciding whether or not to meet the demands of the Ukrainian government. And as President Poroshenko said once more, the price paid by Ukrainians was “worth something: for instance, a statement on the part of the EU” to the effect that “once Ukraine would be ready, it would be in [the EU]”. He added that such a statement would cost the EU “nothing” but it would mean “the world” to his country. (Pridham, 2014)

Once more, as happened in the previous Chapter, it is important to highlight that both parties involved in the escalation of the Ukrainian situation regarded, in their own ways, the EU as an intentional actor and, particularly Russia given its aspirations in the international arena, associated it with other great powers. In this sense, while it remains difficult to assert the causal impact that the EU had on the Ukrainian situation, this section aimed to highlight that the EU acted and projected itself as a global international actor and was perceived as being part of the ‘same club’ as the US.

#### **4. The EUAM on the field**

As for the previous Chapter, this final section's main aim is to look at the first year on the field of the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM). Just like Georgia, Ukraine is part of the ENP and the EaP but these conditions did not seem enough to get the country closer to the EU. In fact, as explained previously in this chapter, it will be the series of events starting from the end of 2013 and the EU's decision to deploy the advisory mission a decision to actually witness a change in this relationship.

On 1 December 2014, the European Union (EU) launched a civilian EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) in the framework of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) with the purpose to advice Ukrainian officials on civilian Security Sector Reform (SSR). The mission's objectives since its start were to improve the accountability of Ukraine's security services and restore public confidence in them following their use of violence against the Ukrainian people during the Euromaidan protests, which culminated in the fleeing of President Yanukovich in February 2014. (EUAM, 2014; Novaky, 2015)

On 9 April of the same year, Poland, Sweden, and the UK circulated a proposition for the deployment of 'a civilian capacity-building CSDP mission' to Ukraine. EU member states wanted the mission's planning process to be conducted quickly and efficiently to give a clear signal of political support to Ukraine. The mission statement explains that the CSDP mission would 'mentor and advise relevant Ukrainian bodies in the elaboration of renewed security strategies and in the consequent implementation of relevant comprehensive and cohesive reform efforts'. (Council of the European Union, 2014) Its aims were threefold: firstly, to 'create a conceptual framework for planning and implementing reforms that result in sustainable security services delivering the

rule of law'; secondly, to 'reorganise and restructure the security services in a way which permits recovering control and accountability over them'; and thirdly, to 'ensure coherence of the action of the international community' in support of Ukraine (Council of the European Union, 2014).

The EUAM represents a compromise solution between the Ukrainian request for the EU to provide an armed police mission in the conflict zone in the east of the country and the EU's initial soft-power (advisory) response. (Wolczuk and Žeruolis, 2018) However, the one in Ukraine is unique because the mission has been deployed during the war with Russia rather than as a post-conflict instrument. As evident from this excerpt, the ongoing nature of the conflict situation complicated the issue tremendously. This is because the negotiations would have needed to be conducted in a dual manner. First, the EU needed to create the preconditions of a ceasefire to be able to establish a space of inter-subjective dialogue among parties at war. Second, the Organisation needed to think strategically about the post-ceasefire scenario in terms of actors involved in the negotiations and incentives to promote peace. On this, the presence of the EUAM demonstrates the EU's strategic interest in countering Russia's aggression and its influence in Ukraine's civilian security sector. However, the EUAM is primarily designed as a 'normative' project to empower local actors in an effort to free the civilian security sector of corruption and Soviet-era practices. (Wolczuk and Žeruolis, 2018). The deployment of such a mission without a proper analysis of the situation in Ukraine led to a chaotic start: however, the EUAM responded by initially implementing smaller projects.

At the moment of the start, the mission had a staff of more than one hundred internationals and 75 locals. A budget of 13.1 million € for the first year and an initial mandate was foreseen for two years.

The mission is in place to support Ukrainian authorities achieve reform of the civilian security sector through strategic advice and hands-on support. As already underlined, the mandate includes three areas of operations:

1. Strategic advice on civilian security sector reform to develop civilian security sector strategies
2. Support the implementation of reforms hands-on advice, training, projects
3. Cooperation and coordination to ensure that reform efforts are coordinated with Ukrainian and international actors

And five priorities:

1. Human-resource management to help ensure that the right people are deployed in the right way in order to achieve reform. Civilian security sector agencies are in charge of the introduction of a range of legislative and technical reform measures, but it is the staff of those agencies who carry the responsibility for implementing the measures.
2. Criminal Investigation to strengthen the ability to fight organised crime and corruption, in order to preserve the rule of law and protect its citizens against crime and strengthen the entire democratic process and builds public trust.
3. Ensure public order by maintaining peace and the right to assemble in accordance with international human-rights standards. Citizens have a democratic right to demonstrate and express dissatisfaction with the government, but in peaceful way and within the bounds of the law.

4. Community Policing the right to say how citizens would like to be policed. Community policing involves building trust within communities through direct interaction and dialogue.
5. Delineation of competencies about the division of labour and the responsibilities of civilian security sector agencies. With several agencies on the ground, it is important to clarify who does what, to ensure coordination between different agencies in order to avoid overlap and confusion.

However, for the purpose of this study, only the first year will be analysed. In terms of expectations the EUAM was conceived as a civilian short to medium-term initiative, whereas civilian security sector reform is a long-lasting project. For this reason, the mission's results were most likely going to have limited visibility in the short term. Finally, the first press release of the EUAM underlines how the EU has had a comprehensive approach to Ukraine: 'the mission's contribution made by the mission complements is fully coordinated with the EU's other external action tools, in particular the EU's political engagement, financial assistance, existing support to civilian Security Sector Reform (SSR) by EU instruments and agencies, the activities of the EU Delegation in Kiev, the Ukraine Support Group and other key international actors and will seek to avoid any duplication'. (EUAM, 2014)

In contrast with what happened in Georgia, where after a few months on the field with mission of the OSCE and the UN, the EUMM remained the only one actively working on the territory, in Ukraine, in at the beginning of March 2015, the EUAM was joined by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission which was designed to operate on the ground to monitor the situation in the country, including the implementation of Minsk

agreements, particularly with regard inter alia to the heavy weapons withdrawal. (EUAM, 2015) Later on, in June, High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini announced that the EUAM would increase its support to the OSCE mission and declared: “The EU is deploying all the tools at its disposal to support the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, which offer the best chance we have for moving towards a peaceful, sustainable solution to the conflict in Ukraine based on respect for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is why we are facilitating engagement in various formats, and it is why we are the biggest contributor to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, which plays a key role in this implementation. Today we are stepping-up this support with an additional € 18 million for the crucial work of the Mission.” (EUAM, 2015)

The EUR 18 million package will be used to fund SMM monitors (EUR 6 million) and satellite imagery and analysis (to be provided by the EU Satellite Centre) as well as other complementary monitoring tools (EUR 12 million). The measures are funded under the EU’s ‘Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace’ and come on top of previous contributions of EUR 7 million under this instrument.(EUAM, 2015)

However, it is worth reminding that neither Mogherini nor Tusk or Juncker were actually present in Minsk. French President Hollande and German Chancellor Merkel were representing the EU. While the author of the thesis has always had a strong (and negative) opinion about these absences in Minsk, the interviews<sup>39</sup> held in Brussels have brought more clarity to the matter: among the opinion collected, one was particularly interesting because it supported the argument that the Minsk agreements would not work because nobody at the table actually wanted to hear what the others

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<sup>39</sup> Interviews with European Parliament and European Commission staff, Brussels, September 2018

had to say. Eventually the actors present at the negotiation table would not change the fact that all the parties needed to strengthen the implementation of their control tools. These statements on the interactions among different members of the EU on the matter highlight a crucial theoretical point that has been stressed throughout the entire thesis. The EU, in order to act efficiently and to be perceived as legitimate by local actors, necessitates of vertical coherence. This, has already noted, emphasises the fundamental notion that single member-state interests should be reflected in the policy options that the EU promotes that, in turn, should be the result of extensive consultations among different voices within the institution. The interviews held in Brussel seem to corroborate this liberal-institutionalist tenet, and seem to corroborate the idea that in lack of such coordination, the efforts of the Union were likely to be only marginally impactful.

One action that is particularly interesting in the first year on the field of the EUAM is the meeting, in March 2015, between the Head of Mission Kalman Mizsei and the Head of Verkhovna Rada, Volodymyr Groysman. (EUAM 2015) This, in fact, has been followed by a three-day intensive visit of a European Parliament delegation to participate to consultations on EU-Ukraine cooperation and the financial and expert assistance provided by the EU. (EUAM, 2015) The European Parliament's Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) led by Pat Cox had identified a space to promote a project on internal reform and capacity building for the Verkhovna Rada. From September 2015 to February 2016, seven areas have been assessed: Legislative capacity and process in the Verkhovna Rada; Political oversight of the Executive; Openness, transparency and accountability to citizens; Approximation of Ukrainian legislation to the EU *acquis*; Administrative capacities; Coalition, opposition and dialogue within the Verkhovna Rada and Ethics and conduct at the Verkhovna Rada. (European



Parliament, Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group, 2016) This preliminary work has provided further knowledge of the areas to improve and also of the Ukrainian MPs<sup>40</sup>. In contrast with what was observed about the Georgian Parliament, only half of the Ukrainian MPs can speak some English while rest cannot at all. Also, it has been eye opening for the purpose of the mission to observe that since the independence of 1991, not much has changed in the Verkhovna Rada: the Parliament is composed by 450 Members (28 seats are empty because belong to the Donbass region and Crimea), half of these seats are assigned by Party lists and the other half to local constituencies. The MPs “population” has remained quite the same since the independence only to see new faces after the Maidan revolution (one third of the elected).

In line with the objective of the EUAM, in over 100 meetings in less than 6 months, the NAM has discussed with the Verkhovna Rada leadership, Committee Chairs, individual MPs and most importantly political faction leaders and the government of Ukraine itself, how to implement capacity-building partnership in order to: strengthen the constitutional role of law-making; improving the legislative process and the quality of the legislation; increasing transparency, predictability, efficiency and openness of the proceedings; contributing to the effective implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, Brussels, September 2018

<sup>41</sup> The continuation of this project is outside of the scope of this research. It is worth mentioning though that the author has extensively discussed its objectives and content with different Officials and Administrators of the European Parliament during interviews held in Brussels in September 2018. More information can be found through the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine here [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine\\_el/27683/Rada%20za%20Evropu:%20Capacity-Building%20in%20Support%20of%20the%20Verkhovna%20Rada%20of%20Ukraine](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine_el/27683/Rada%20za%20Evropu:%20Capacity-Building%20in%20Support%20of%20the%20Verkhovna%20Rada%20of%20Ukraine) (accessed on October 25, 2018). At the time of writing, the Rada for Europe Final report was accessed by the author as a draft.

Along with these improvements, in September 2015, the Verkhovna Rada voted on the constitutional amendments related to decentralisation leading towards a substantial devolution of powers from the central level to regions and communities, increasing in parallel the accountability of territorial self-governments to their constituencies. The amendments were aimed also to facilitate the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. While pleased for the result of the vote, HR-VP Federica Mogherini (EAUM, 2015) had to face the fact that this event came with violent demonstrations in front of the Verkhovna Rada. As a consequence, a law enforcement officer died and others people were injured following an explosion.

It has to be said that, in truth, the mission has shown both positive and less positive signs during the first year on the field. The mission has faced (and still does) challenges (EUAM, 2016) that hinder reform of the civilian security sector, such as unwillingness and resistance to change, gaps in legislation, insufficient funding, unsatisfactory professional standards, a lack of coordination between agencies, and the prevalence of corruption<sup>42</sup> (the electoral system and the lack of a deep knowledge of the constitutional powers of many MPs has actually worsened the situation at different occasions).

This does not mean that the Ukrainian government has not worked in order to improve reform but has actually clearly outlined its reform priorities in areas such as anti-corruption, the police, and the judicial system. What is urgent to address is the low levels of public trust in the political, law-enforcement and judicial systems of the Ukrainians.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, Brussels, September 2018

However, by the beginning of 2016, EUAM has added operational, projects, and training activities to its mandate in order to assist with the implementation of reforms<sup>43</sup>.

## **5. Conclusions**

To conclude this chapter, it is important to state that the case of Ukraine was selected as a direct consequence of Georgia. This has been a further occasion to analyse the major strategies that the EU, as an international normative actor, implemented in the impact on Ukraine after the Maidan revolution and with an actual conflict on the territory. Moreover, the aim of the Chapter was to also assess the responses that such policies had in Ukraine and its society, as well as their outcome in the first 12 months of the intervention.

The chapter has identified four major strategies that the Union adopted in terms of foreign policy to impact on the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict and the reform of the civilian security sector. First, through the framework provided by the ENP (especially considering its re-launch in 2015) and the EaP, the EU has tried to influence decision-making processes within the Ukrainian government to improve the quality of the law-making process and the security sector. Secondly, the EU had already found a positive reception from the people, at least in the western part of the country and the capital (as it was made very clear during the Maidan revolution)<sup>44</sup>, the EU has also attempted to expand its consensus through the talks about Visa free travel in Europe,

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<sup>43</sup> While this is outside the timeframe of this research project, more information can be found here <http://www.euam-ukraine.eu/our-mission/progress-in-reform/> (accessed December, 2018)

<sup>44</sup> This is a well known fact in the literature. However, the author held interviews with several people that actually participated in the Maidan revolution that confirmed this perception. Interviews held in Kiev, August 2018

the improvement of the Association Agreement and the re-discussion of trade barriers (supported by President Poroshenko)<sup>45</sup>. Third, the organisation has provided financial aid as an incentive for the Ukrainian government to cooperate with it, and to create a more stable space to discuss the reform. Fourth, through the EUAM mission, the EU has established a presence on the field to improve the reform and obtain results possibly on more than a short-term basis.

Finally, there are points of progress that need to be mentioned in relation to the EU's advancements in these fields. First, the deployment of an advisory mission in a country that is actually experiencing a conflict on its territory is an important achievement. Second, the actors involved in the activities of the mission look at it as a guide, *de facto* recognising its expertise and its role as an international actor. Third, as for the case of Georgia, despite some discrepancies among member states, the EU has still promoted policies to enhance the values and norms that the EU stands for.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, Brussels, September 2018



## **Part III**

### **Chapter 5 – Conclusions**

#### **1. Introduction: Summary of the Study**

This thesis has focused on the question: How did the EU, as a coherent international normative actor, promoted conflict resolution in Georgia and Ukraine? To be able to answer such a question the research design articulated it in the form of the following three sub questions:

- What have been the major structural incentives that the EU adopted in its foreign policy-making in relation to the Georgian and Ukrainian cases?
- How did the actors involved in the conflicts respond to the EU's policies?
- What were the major constraints to the EU's approach to conflict resolution in the two situations?

This chapter provides a review of the answers to these questions.

The EU, as an organization, is founded upon various treaties and documents that define its nature, objectives, and approaches to problematic situations in international politics. Among these, the Treaty of Rome (1957); the Single European Act (1986); the Maastricht Treaty (1992) the Amsterdam Treaty (1997); the Treaty of Nice (2001); and the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), seem to carry particular significance to understand how the organizations defines itself and projects its aim in the international arena. A set of

subsequent documents, such as the ESS, and RIESSM and the GSEU (2016) deal more specifically with the EU's role in conflict situations.

This thesis explored the implication associated with EU attempts at resolving the Georgian and Ukrainian conflicts, mainly to understand the organization's role in international politics and its foreign policy strategies in the two situations. The thesis studied these dynamics by investigating the structures that emerged in contingency with the EU's operations in the two countries, as well as relating them with their receptions (and perceptions) in Georgia and Ukraine. To do so, it attempted at establishing relational links between what happened in Georgia and Ukraine, their meaning for the role of the EU in international politics, and their relationship with alternative paths to the promotion of peace. The investigation adopted QCA and comparative methodologies, in light of the theoretical dictats of liberalism. The thesis, in its entirety, confirmed that the EU can be considered as an international normative power in conflict resolution for three reasons: first, it acted and was perceived as a coherent third-party actor by those involved in the Georgian and Ukrainian situations. Second, it promoted values and norms that sometimes conflicted with its own members' interests. And third, it is one of the only actors in international politics that seems to be ideologically and practically equipped to deal with hybrid wars, such as the ones in Georgia and Ukraine. What follows is a brief summary of the chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 1 outlined the relevance of the study in the current political climate, as well as introducing the related methodological approaches to it. In doing so, it advocated in favor theoretical and methodological eclecticism, over epistemological purism. It has done so by indicating how comparative cases, QCA, and elite interviews were used to answer the main questions of the research, also outlined in the same Chapter.

Interviews, in particular, were extremely helpful for two reasons. First, they confirmed or rejected common assumptions adopted from the literature. And two, they informed the dissertation from the side of policy makers.

Chapter 2 provided an introduction to the main theoretical components of the analysis, derived mainly from the liberal schools of IR. In other terms this Chapter specified how the EU's approaches to Georgia and Ukraine was to be evaluated, and how specific concepts informed the discussion. In the chapter there is also a brief introduction (expanded later) on the concept of hybrid warfare that has characterised the Georgian and Ukrainian situations. This concept is considered as being very important for this dissertation but also for the EU's role in conflict resolution, since hybrid wars seem to respond badly to coercive means of diplomacy.

After the introduction, and the theoretical Chapter, the thesis unfolded in three Chapters dedicated to the assessment of the impact of the EU in Georgia and Ukraine. Chapter 3 outlined that in Georgia, the EU acted as an international normative actor because despite the initial differences among its member states, it coherently implemented a very articulated mission under a single banner, where different policies of the EU didn't conflict one with the other. However, the Chapter has also highlighted that in terms of vertical coherence, the internal divisions among its members impeded the Union from reaching its full potential. Also, the Chapter demonstrated that the EU, and its projection in the conflict the EUMM, was perceived as an international normative actor both by the Saakashvili and Medvedev governments. The Gerasimov Doctrine, articulated in the form of hybrid wars and that was embryonal in Georgia, also proved to be a challenge for the EU's ability to deliver on its mandates. In fact, the blurring of civil-military lines, coupled with the covert-nature of military operations, increased the complexity of identifying those actors that should have taken part in the



diplomatic efforts to solve the conflicts. Furthermore, the psychological dimension of hybrid warfare tends to create a context *a priori* averse to the EU.

Ultimately this analysis revealed that after the 5 initial days of war, the EU contributed successfully in the creation of a space for intersubjective dialogue that provided incentives for the warring parties to terminate the hostilities.

Chapter 4 proceeded on similar terms to explore the Ukrainian situation. Interestingly, it reached similar conclusions in the sense that the EU was treated as an international normative player both by the Putin and Yanukovich governments. This emerges from the analysis of official documents and declarations that highlight this discursive structure. Unfortunately, if compared to the Georgian situation, the Ukrainian situation has proven to be much more difficult to pacify in the first 12 months of the EUMM. This, the Chapter argued, can be related to the fact that Ukraine has been constantly subject of external influences from conventional great powers, especially Russia. This dimension, stressed particularly through the interviews with EU officials, has created considerable problems in the EU approach to the Ukrainian situation. Namely, it has been noted, the explicit influence of a great power in the dialogic process to pacify the complex has proven to be a test-case for the ability of the EU to provide incentives to local governments. However, because of Russia's increasing hostility towards the EU, the Organisation's efforts to build a solid and peaceful relationship with Ukraine have been greatly challenged. And this seems to have halted the melioration of the conflict.

This final Chapter, summarises the findings of the thesis as well as highlighting its policy implications and the avenues for further research.

## **2. The EU's Foreign Policy Actorness in the Georgian and Ukrainian Conflicts**

The core aim of this thesis was to understand what foreign policy strategies the EU adopted in relation to the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine. The three chapters after the introduction dissected this question theoretically and empirically and evolved around some key themes: first, they outlined the basic concepts and theoretical tenets that informed the discussion. It has been argued that the Union acted as an international normative player, by aiming at creating spaces of intersubjectivity that would, on one hand spread the liberal values that the organisation embodies, on the other ease the pacification of the two conflicts. Second, the Chapters evaluated the EU operations in Georgia and Ukraine in their first 12 months on the bases of how the organisation structured its response to the two crises (through the neighbourhood policy and the EUAM and EUMM missions); and how these structures and incentives were received in Georgia and Ukraine.

Comparatively, certain similarities emerge in the approach of the Union to the two situations. In terms of the incentives provided by the neighbourhood policy in Georgia the EU has encouraged the country to strengthen the political dialogue to include matters of human rights, security, economic development and more. After the conflict of August 2008 with Russia, the EU responded rapidly and effectively with a diplomatic mission led by the French President Nicholas Sarkozy. The six-points ceasefire has been the base for any further talk or agreement between the parties. The EUMM was established a month after, on September 15, and started on the field officially on October 1, following an official invitation of the Georgian government. This rapid response and presence on the ground was a fundamental step that would finally increase the visibility of actions taken by the EU action in Georgia. This

indicates a change, or as it has been identified in the literature, a turning point for the EU in the understanding of, firstly, its own role in the process of decision-making, and, secondly, of the actual necessities to address on the field. This was followed, at the end of 2008, by an unprecedented change of events: both UNOMIG led by the UN and the OSCE mission did not see their mandate extended and the EU remained the only international actor managing the post-conflict situation in Georgia. These developments were also aided by a generally positive stance that the Georgian political elite has towards the EU. Something that has been repeatedly stressed by those EU officials interviewed by the author. This environment has rendered the Organization's efforts to alter the conflict situation and to establish a fruitful space for debate much more appealing to local actors. In contingency with the tenets of liberal-institutionalism outlined in Chapter 1, this has eased the ability of the EU to become a legitimate and more efficient actor in the solution of the conflict.

While these starting points seem to be underlining all positive outcomes, it has to be said that the civilian nature of the mission and 'the lack of executive powers to enforce compliance', (Freire and Simao, 2013) suggest that the EU was actually very concerned with the image projected in Georgia and on the international scenario and by the long-term responsibilities this mission could entail for the CSDP.

As the author of this thesis has noticed from different interviews with EU officials<sup>46</sup> and as reiterated in the literature, the rare agreement among the EU member states was the result of an analysis highlighting a set of main conditions that allowed the quick deployment of the mission; among them, here are presented those that the author has encountered several times: firstly, the understanding that this was a significant security crisis in the EU neighbourhood, especially since the creation of the

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<sup>46</sup> These have been held in Brussels or via Skype between June and September 2018

ENP; the immediate and strong (re)action of the French presidency of the EU led by Nicholas Sarkozy; the consequences of the conflict on EU relations with Russia (especially with Germany, France and Poland) and the acknowledgement of the role of the EU by Russia in the resolution of the conflict for the first time in the post-Soviet space (the EU has not recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia but Russia was nonetheless quite satisfied with the maintenance of the status quo). Eventually, the first year of monitoring activities, despite the limitation to access Abkhaz and South Ossetian territory, have allowed the clarification of incidents, more transparency in cross-border exchanges and thus contributed to confidence-building both at the level of the parties involved in the negotiations process, as well as regarding the populations.

On the 'negative' side, the field office in Khashuri was closed after one year, since it covered a limited area of responsibility. Also, as explained in Chapter three, despite the daily monitoring of activities along the ABL, this has only happened on Georgian territory and so, as already underlined, this situation lessens the implementation of the mandate because of its limited monitoring capacity, and as a consequence, a limited security assurance and confidence-building needed for the normalisation of the situation.

Also, in terms of trust towards the objectives of the mission, in August 2009, in an interview to Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, the EUSR Peter Semneby was asked about the possibility of having released two different versions of the ceasefire agreement. The Georgian government was complaining about the sixth point of the document that was included in the version published in Russia. The difference would have been about the possibility for the status issue [of Abkhazia and South Ossetia] to be discussed. Semneby (2008) replied that 'in the talks that were launched as a result

of the signing of the agreements, the status issues are not discussed. These talks deal with some very technical, but nevertheless extremely important, aspects of the conflicts. It is security-related issues on the one hand and issues related to [internally displaced persons] and refugees on the other hand. But the status issues (were) not part of those talks and not part of the implementation of the agreements as they have been signed'. (Semneby, 2008) He concluded saying that 'there is (just) one agreement. That is the agreement of the 12th of August and then there is (however) another set of documents, which is not a separate agreement but is a set of arrangements for the implementation of the main agreement'. (Semneby, 2008)

The overall approach of the EU to Georgia has been advanced by the European Commission as a pathway for the resolution of the conflict that plagued the country. In consistency with the liberal approach to peace, the ENP in Georgia has to be understood as providing a space for Georgia to become more integrated with the EU, as well as an effort aimed at the promotion of those norms and values that underpin the Union as a whole. Among the various incentives that the EU provided, a great emphasis was put on economic development. In fact, to quote just one of the few examples, the Commission provided 9 million of euros for humanitarian aid for those displaced by the conflict, followed by a pledge with the World Bank (WB) for 5 hundred million of euros for several projects, including humanitarian assistance (8 million of euros), support for IDPs (for almost 80 million of euros) and for the EUMM (37 million of euros for the first year of the mission). (Whitman and Wolff, 2012: 97). Since this thesis argued in favour of the creation of spaces of intersubjective dialogue to pacify conflicts, these advancements have to be read as an attempt of the EU to shape the behaviour of Georgia through economic incentives. Furthermore, a stronger link between Georgia and the EU, in the eyes of EU members, would have facilitated a

Georgia more economically independent from Russia. And this has been seen as one of the cornerstone of the EU foreign policy strategies in the country.

It is also worth noting that, despite mixed results, the EU was also able to mobilise local NGOs. Precisely because of the relevant financial assistance to Georgia, the Union necessitated logistic cooperation to implement its policies. But a stronger tie between the EU and NGOs was not only invoked for these practical purposes. In fact, the thesis has shown, that NGOs are often used as “red-lights” to signal the existence of a humanitarian problem in the country. And while this has not prevented the Russian expansionist policy, it has undoubtedly influenced the non-escalation of the conflict after the ceasefire.

In the case of Ukraine, in terms of the incentives provided by the Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, the EU has encouraged the country to reform and to, once again, strengthen the political dialogue to include, among others, matters of human rights, security and economic development. In 2004, the Orange Revolution represented a pledge for a change towards real democratisation and it raised many expectations of a new start for the EU-Ukraine relations, but this hope was undermined by a very limited actual change: a promise of free and fair elections and a free press, but worsening corruption and the failure of judicial reform. (Pridham, 2014). As already noted, a fairer and more transparent electoral system has always been one of the major cornerstones of EU’s approaches to Ukraine. This has to be read, on one side, as a practical attempt to meliorate the political horizon of the country. On the other, as part of a general approach that stems from liberal-institutionalism, that sees the promotion of democracy as quintessential in the construction of an international order. Namely because, as clarified in Chapter 1, democracies tend to avoid wars with other democracies.

However, by the end of 2013, the situation did not look any better as President Yanukovich's cabinet left the consultations to close an agreement on closer trade ties with EU to seek instead a closer partnership with Russia. The decision to get to that agreement had not been easy for the EU to take because it had to recognise the geopolitical importance of Ukraine and not all the actors involved were persuaded that geopolitical factors would be enough to get closer to such a problematic country. Already since 2009, what followed the ENP to enhance the engagement of the EU toward its eastern neighbours, the launch of the EaP promised to promote democracy and good governance; strengthen energy security; promote sector reform. Regardless of this, a mixture of hostility and disinterest for the country, led these warnings to go unheard. Early warning mechanisms demonstrated to be insufficient to help the EU in the approach to the Ukrainian situation. In addition, different opinions among the member states and between the European leaders themselves (it is the case of different approaches to the situation demonstrated by Commissioner Füle and HR-VP Ashton) can create confusion when a rapid reaction is required. It is also worth noting that the Gerasimov Doctrine, in its infancy in Georgia, became fully-fledged in Ukraine. The tactics deployed greatly questioned the ability of the EU to act as a pacificator in the region, essentially by complicating the creation of a diplomatic dialogue among warring parties, and by exacerbating the tensions between the Ukrainian government and the EU.

After the annexation of Crimea, however, the EU could not hesitate anymore and had to take a stronger stance. To this realisation, followed economic sanctions against Russia. These sanctions have been prolonged several times and marked a difference with Georgia in which case they were not applied, even though there were discussions about it. It is interesting to note that a more affirmative stance from the EU towards

Russia did not produce the desired outcomes, as specified during the interviews conducted by the author in Brussels and Kiev. Eventually, in fact, the sanctions resulted in an even worse outcome because antagonising one of the parts (Russia) that should cooperate instead in the process of conflict resolution did not prove to be beneficial. Furthermore, it brought several internal divisions in the EU. So that the implementation of economic sanctions, that was undertaken with the prospect of persuading the Russian government to cooperate with the EU, produced two very tangible negative effects: first, it jeopardised the diplomatic efforts to create a diplomatic space of dialogue among all the parties involved in the conflict. And second, it exacerbated the tensions among member-states of the EU. This resulted in lack of vertical coherence that, eventually, also hampered the legitimacy prospects of the Union in Ukraine. However, the internal situation in Ukraine seemed to change and Yanukovych's replacement by an interim pro-EU government led to an immediate outcome: in fact, it re-opened the way for a 'concrete supportive action by Brussels in conjunction with other international organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'. (Pridham, 2014) Moreover, the possibility for the EU to actually deploy a CSDP mission was discussed at a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Estonia. The Swedish Minister highlighted the urgency to act and, after this meeting, both British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President François Hollande expressed the necessity to act quickly in order to guarantee fair and transparent elections under international control. However, the EU had to think about how to overcome the limits that could actually encounter because, as already seen, the majority of its member states (Germany, for example) were unwilling to do anything that would put them in a difficult position with the Kremlin. But the EU also worked diplomatically in the construction of an Association Agreement (2014) with the



government of Ukraine, and this had important implications for the construction of an intersubjective moment in which Russia and the EU attempted at exerting their influence on Ukrainian politics. The Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was founded on the willingness of both parts to establish a new stage in their relationship based on reciprocity and interdependence that aims, among the other issues, at tackling the problem of intrastate violence. This is particularly evident by looking at the preamble of the Agreement that among its primary objectives has:

(b) to provide an appropriate framework for enhanced political dialogue in all areas of mutual interest;

(c) to promote, preserve and strengthen peace and stability in the regional and international dimensions in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, and of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the objectives of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990;

(e) to enhance cooperation in the field of Justice, Freedom and Security with the aim of reinforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(f) to establish conditions for increasingly close cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. (EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, 2014)

Moreover, the section outlining Aims of Political Dialogue stresses the importance of the EU-Ukrainian partnership:

(a) to promote international stability and security based on effective multilateralism;

- (b) to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between the Parties on international security and crisis management, particularly in order to address global and regional challenges and key threats;
- (c) to foster result-oriented and practical cooperation between the Parties for achieving peace, security and stability on the European continent;
- (d) to strengthen respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, non-discrimination of persons belonging to minorities and respect for diversity, and to contribute to consolidating domestic political reforms (EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, 2014)

Regarding the first 12 months of operations of the two missions, it seems that the EU has faced some problems that are shared both by the EUMM and EUAM missions. In fact, this thesis has argued that the first 12 months of the EUMM and EUAM missions are crucial to understand the strategies that the EU attempted at adopting in relation to the conflicts, as well as understanding the reactions that such policies generated. The first 12 months of the EUMM mission were characterised by intense discussions on the mechanisms to facilitate the process of negotiation and finding a political agreement. It is undeniable that, in the first twelve months, the mission has faced several challenges and had to overcome many limitations that can be found in the literature and also confirmed by the interviews, mostly related to the three aspects listed above: the EU decision-making process which is rarely as quick as in the case of the decision of the deployment of the EUMM; the divisions among the member states

on their relationship with Russia and, most importantly, the actual intention of all the actors involved to achieve a peaceful settlement. After its first year of activity, the EUMM was definitely at a crossroad: the Georgian authorities have recognised the EU as a security and global actor but the separatist regions on the other side of the ABL assigned this same role to Russia instead.

The discussions within the EU ultimately agreed on the creation of the IPRM, the creation of a “Hotline” telephone system to report incidents, and in general to make the EUMM as accessible as possible to local civilians. Given the continued presence of Russian troops in the separatist regions, the EU in the first year intensified the patrolling of the borders to protect one of the cornerstones of its liberal foreign policy: territoriality. While the first 12 months are only indicative of the strategies adopted and their rationale, it seems evident that the ceasefire held. No major incidents were recorded with the EU’s deterrent presence in the country, and no expansionists moves were made by Russian forces with the Union’s personnel patrolling the borders. The importance of the relationship between the EU and local actors, not only state authorities, emerges out of the two case studies as a nodal point for the Organisation to be able to deliver on its mandates. As already shown, this emerged quite clearly from the intention of the EU to be perceived as present as possible in the two countries. However, the complexities of the situations, dramatically highlighted by the political and military tactics deployed by warring parties in Georgia and Ukraine, often hampered the construction of such a fruitful relationship.

Overall, the first 12 months of the EUMM mission can be understood as positive for both the EU itself and the solution of the Georgian conflict. For the EU, the continuous references to the organisation made by Georgian and Russian authorities legitimated on one side the international actorness of the Union, and on the other recognised its

presence as something to be included in rational-choice processes. The fact that a ceasefire was drafted, and that no escalation of the conflict was recorded, can be read in a positive manner. On the Georgian side, the EUMM provided with a first point of contact to report incidents and to make sure that any further violation of territoriality would not go unnoticed. Given the inclusiveness of the mandate of the mission, and its attempt to be as transparent as possible, it seems that the EUMM set the basis for conflict resolution in hybrid warfare situations, with all its limitations.

In the case of Ukraine, similarly to Georgia, the first 12 months of the EUAM mission have been theatre of many discussions on the mechanisms to enhance the reform of the civilian security sector. It would be a lie to say that, during the first year, did not face any challenges, threats or even confusion: aspects of these limitations can be found in the literature and also confirmed by the interviews.

The EUAM in Ukraine formally began its operations on 1 December 2014, following the Maidan revolution and in response to a formal invitation issued by the Ukrainian government. According to the statement of the mission, the main goal of EUAM is ‘to achieve a civilian security sector that is efficient, accountable, and enjoys the trust of the public’. (EUAM, 2014) The Mandate of the mission includes more than 100 Ukrainian and 75 international staff that are dedicated to implement three pillars of activity:

- 1) Strategic advice on civilian security sector reform;
- 2) Support the implementation of reforms, through the delivery of hands-on advice, training, and other projects;
- 3) Cooperation and coordination, to ensure that reforms are coordinated with Ukrainian and international actors. (EUAM, 2014)

Two characteristics seem to emerge from this quick check-list of actions and goals foreseen in the mandate of the EUAM. First, as happened in Georgia, the main goal of the mission was to be achieved in coordination with local actors and derives from a contractual nature of the EU but also of the EUAM itself. The fact that the EU started its operations when the government of Ukraine issued a formal request responds to the question of legitimacy of the EU presence on the Ukrainian territory. However, in contrast with the Georgian situation where the Monitoring Mission incorporated patrolling of sensitive zones of conflict, in Ukraine the EU has an advisory role that aims at assessing different elements of the Ukrainian civilian sectors.

In order to reiterate this concept, at the time of EU increasing involvement in the Ukrainian situation, the European Commission (EC) issued a statement that read

The European Union has important relations with Ukraine and the Russian Federation and stands ready to engage in a frank and open dialogue with them. It has a special responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in Europe.  
(European Commission, 2014)

In the same statement, a few lines below, one can read that “The European Union's and the Russian Federation's common objective of a relationship based on mutual interest and respect of international obligations needs to be promptly restored.”, and that “the solution to the crisis should be found through negotiations between the Governments of Ukraine and the Russian Federation, including through potential multilateral mechanisms.” (EC, 2014)

These statements implicitly highlight a further issue that has emerged in the analysis of both case studies. The involvement of a great power in the two conflict-

scenarios has been regarded initially at the same time as a challenge and as an opportunity. The ability of the Organisation to persuade Russia to cease the hostilities and initiate a diplomatic process towards the construction of a long lasting peace rested on the EU's ability to juggle its international normative stance and its practical aims. It is interesting to note that when the EU took a more affirmative, even hostile, stance (through the promulgation of economic sanctions against Russia after Crimea, it greatly endangered the prospects of diplomatic solutions. This seems to be consistent with the idea that in the age of hybrid wars, actors tend to respond to forcible pressures negatively.

As explained in the previous chapter, in terms of expectations, the EUAM was conceived as a civilian short to medium-term initiative, whereas civilian security sector reform is a long lasting project. For this reason, the mission's results were most likely going to have limited visibility in the short term. Also in contrast with Georgia, where the EUMM remained the only mission actively working on the territory, after the OSCE and the UNOMIG missions did not see their mandates renewed; the EUAM, at the beginning of March 2015, was joined by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, designed to operate on the ground to monitor the situation in the country, including the implementation of Minsk agreements. The support for this mission was officially declared by HR-VP Federica Mogherini.

Finally, during the first year of activities, the EUAM has witnessed a close relationship between the European Parliament and Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. From September 2015 to February 2016, seven areas have been assessed by the NAM led by Former European Parliament President Pat Cox: Legislative capacity and process in the Verkhovna Rada; Political oversight of the Executive; Openness, transparency and accountability to citizens; Approximation of Ukrainian legislation

to the EU *acquis*; Administrative capacities; Coalition, opposition and dialogue within the Verkhovna Rada and Ethics and conduct at the Verkhovna Rada. These discussion were aimed at understanding how Ukraine could implement capacity-building partnership in order to: strengthen the constitutional role of law-making; improving the legislative process and the quality of the legislation; increasing transparency, predictability, efficiency and openness of the proceedings; contributing to the effective implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. As discussed in the previous chapter, this project is proof of the actual interest of the EU towards actual reforms in EU; it has brought together different kinds of expertise from the EU institutions and has addressed many actors involved on the Ukrainian side; and, finally, it has laid the foundations for a longer project (June 2016 – August 2018) to support parliamentary transformation: the Rada for Europe. It is also very interesting to note the choice of the wording: in fact, this highlight even more the importance of the legislative process to get Ukraine closer to the EU<sup>47</sup>.

Lastly, in relation to the reception of these structures and incentives, while chapter 3 has indicated that EU's policies were perceived as largely beneficial by Georgian authorities, they also antagonised Russia. Since the start of the mission, the Georgian authorities have strongly criticised Russia for lack of cooperation with the EUMM, highlighting, in particular, their unilateral commitment to the six-point agreement and the non-use of force principle. In fact, as explained in the previous paragraph reviewing the performance of the first twelve months of the EUMM, Russia has

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with European Parliament staff, Brussels, September 2018

cooperated only partially because it the procrastination of the situation as a way to maintain the status quo and, in the long-term the achievement of the recognition of independence for both regions. In terms of normalisation of conditions along the ABL, the EUMM has started working since its first year towards safe conditions for the return of local residents (IDPs) to areas affected by the conflicts. These displaced persons are not only those affected by the 2008 war, but unfortunately, also those that experienced the war of 1991-1993.

The EU, on its side, was unable to grasp the entity and degree of the renewed Russian expansionism and, by attempting to draw Georgia closer to Europe, it posed a serious threat to the Kremlin. Given the theoretical premises of this dissertation, outlined in chapter 2, this generates a considerable problem that has to be acknowledged. In fact, as a third party involved in the conflict, the EU should have created a space where all parties involved could dialogue to resolve the issue in a non-confrontational manner. However, the ENP, the EUMM, and in general the assistance that the EU has provided to Georgia led the Kremlin to perceive the Union as a considerable threat for the Russian sphere. While this might be inevitable, precisely because of the Russian intention to infringe Georgia's territoriality, more attention should have been paid to it in formulating the structures and incentives for Georgia. By antagonising Russia the EU also forced Georgia to choose between the EU and the Kremlin, and given the military threat on its doorstep, this dynamic led to a cooling-down of the EU-Georgian relations. And this can be considered as the first factor in limiting the EU's ability to fully exercise its foreign policy actorness in Georgia. Naturally, managing an expansionist (re)emerging power is not an easy task, however it is also essential if the EU wants to maintain its credibility as a relevant international actor.



Second, while efforts by the EU towards Georgia have been generally horizontally coherent, in the sense that the prescriptions of the ceasefire, the financial aid and the mobilisation of NGOs, and the EUMM mission shared the same objectives and structure, the EU suffered from vertical incoherence. The difference in the approaches of different member states of the EU, as well as their stance towards Russia and their competing interests, prevented the Union from acting as one voice. While it remains true that eventually the EU was capable of formulating a single plan for Georgia, the underpinning differences between some of its members created a perception problem. This is particularly evident when considering more interventionist and anti-Russian states like the UK and France, and some states that have strong economic links with Russia as well as bordering with it, such as Lithuania, Estonia, and Moldavia. This vertical incoherence opened a space for Russia to influence states in its very neighbourhood and de facto greatly crippled the Union's ability to be perceived as a coherent international normative actor.

On a final focus on Ukraine, chapter 4 has underlined how EU's policies were perceived as mostly beneficial by Ukrainian authorities. In fact, President Poroshenko has made clear in different occasions how his country feels close to their European neighbours<sup>48</sup> and that measures are in place for a future membership.

The identification of four main points that the Union has adopted to enhance its impact on the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict and the reform of the civilian security sector are as follow: First, through the framework provided by the ENP (especially considering its re-launch in 2015) and the EaP, the EU has tried to influence

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<sup>48</sup> The author was on fieldwork in Kiev at the end of August 2018. In Ukraine, Independence day is celebrated on August 24. Since the beginning of the conflict it has become one of the most popular bank holidays in the country. While it was impossible to avoid the display of the militaries on parade, the national anthems and songs and the colours of the flag, it is worth mentioning that the European flag was displayed in different occasion and also sold in the streets with Ukrainian flags.

decision-making processes within the Ukrainian government to improve the quality of the law-making process and the security sector. Secondly, the EU had already found a positive reception from the people, at least in the western part of the country and the capital that actually shares borders with EU member states, the EU has also attempted to expand its consensus through the talks about Visa free travel in Europe, the improvement of the Association Agreement and the re-discussion of trade barriers (supported by President Poroshenko). Third, the EU has provided financial aid as an incentive for the Ukrainian government to cooperate with it, and to create a more stable space to discuss the reform. Fourth, through the EUAM mission, the EU has established a presence on the field to improve the reform and obtain results possibly on more than a short-term basis (see the expansion of the Rada for Europe project).

The mission has shown both positive and less positive signs during the first year on the field. The mission has faced many challenges (EUAM, 2016) that have slowed reform of the civilian security sector even before that the EU would deploy a mission on the field, such as unwillingness and resistance to change, gaps in legislation, insufficient funding, unsatisfactory professional standards, a lack of coordination between agencies, and the prevalence of corruption in many sectors of the public administration.

Finally, while this is outside of the timeframe of investigation, it is worth mentioning that on March, 31 2019 Presidential elections will take place in Ukraine. Old faces like Tymoschenko and Poroshenko have been working on their campaigns since last summer, this might be a useful test to check the actual progresses of the reforming process and what impact the elected president will have on the Parliamentary elections.

**Exploring** the questions of this dissertation has eased the understanding of the role of the EU in international politics, especially regarding the organisation's actorness in its foreign-policy formulation, its approach to conflict resolution, its status in the international arena, and its ability to deliver on prospects of peace that lie at the core of the very establishment of the Union.

The answer to the core question of this dissertation is that the two situations in Georgia and Ukraine highlighted that the EU has been influential in contributing to the melioration of the two conflict scenarios, through the incentives provided by the neighbourhood policy and the structuration of the pathways for peace through the EUAM and EUMM missions. Naturally, it would be myopic to assert that the EU has been the sole contributor to these improvements, but because of its contractual nature, and its understanding of peace as a relational concept, the organization has certainly played a role.

However, the Union had a greater impact in Georgia. This is probably due to a complex array of reasons, as indicated in Chapter 4. First, Ukraine seems to have been historically more subject to external inferences, and this has created problems for the EU in accessing local actors. Second, and perhaps most importantly, in 2014 the EU opted for a more forceful approach that included open mediatic rivalry with Russia, as well as the promulgation of economic sanctions. This open confrontation with a Russia on the rise, certainly diminished the EU's space of manoeuvre.

Furthermore, the analysis has also indicated that perceptions on the EU are often disconnected with the purported aims of the organisation. This is due to the fact that the Union cannot be factored in debates about forcible peace, an approach that is becoming dominant despite its evident shortcomings. The methods adopted in the thesis, helped in understanding the content of the major criticism to the EU arising

from local actors, which challenge the organisation's role in international politics. Furthermore, they suggested that despite being heavily criticized within and outside its borders, the EU is perceived as an important mediating actor in conflict resolutions.

### **3. Policy Implications of the Study**

The first implication relates to the current internal situation of the organization. After Brexit, and with many talks about other countries (Italy; Greece; France) potentially leaving the Union, it seems necessary to draw some lessons. The interventions in Georgia and Ukraine highlighted that in order to maintain a position of relevance in the international sphere, the Union needs to better persuade its own members that the Union's goals and their own are not in opposition. This vertical coherence doesn't only affect the perception that states have on the Union, or grants the EU legitimacy to act, but is also a necessary precondition for the full exercise of the organisation's actorness in international politics.

Second, the strength of the EU lies in its normative dimension and in its ability to coordinate different policies that share the common liberal goals that the organisation embodies. This means that normative considerations should be prioritised over short-term goals for the sake of the Union's ability to differentiate itself from other actors in international politics. As already stated, this is also a question of perception. In order to be a normative power, the EU needs to be perceived as promoting norms that are shared by all its members, and not promote the interests of its most powerful ones. The willingness of Georgian and Ukrainian authorities and civilians to cooperate with the EU lies precisely in the Union's purported commitment to the values mentioned above. And while one of these values was of particular relevance for the cases at hand

(territorial integrity), it is the general idea that the Union is there not as another self-interested actor that can actively persuade states to cooperate with it.

Third, the EU seems to be one of the best equipped actors to deal with situations of hybrid warfare, that are more and more common in international politics. As Chapters 3 and 4 indicated, coercive measures to deal with such conflict scenarios are ill-equipped to pacify the tensions among different parties, and in fact tend to exacerbate them. This means that the tools that are often associated with states' interventionism, i.e. military interventions described as humanitarian ones, tend to lead to a pejouration of violence in hybrid wars. The EU, given its commitment to non-invasive and non-military conflict resolution, can provide with structures and incentives to create spaces of intersubjective dialogue among warring parties. Even though these only partially worked in Georgia and Ukraine, the approach remains valid in light of the very nature of hybrid wars.

Fourth, and related to this, the EU needs to be careful when formulating foreign policy strategies as a third-party in a conflict. The Georgian and Ukrainian situations have highlighted that the Union erred to lean too much on the side of the two local governments, at least publicly, because it antagonised the other party involved in the conflict: Russia. While it might prove challenging to strike a balance between promoting territorial integrity and not antagonising expansionist states, it is also necessary for the optimal conduct of non-invasive conflict resolution strategies. As already noted, more attention should be placed on "face-saving" options for expansionist states, so that they might be more inclined in participating in constructive dialogues on how to pacify conflicts.

The fifth, and final, implication of this thesis relates to the changing landscape of international politics, and the temptation to consider military interventions as more

appropriate tools for conflict resolution. The optimism for supranational integration that pervaded the 1990s and 2000s seems to be currently under threat. More aggressive Russian politics in Europe, in contingency with the decline of the American hegemony, are indicative of a reconfiguration of the international community that seems to be returning to a more state-centric society. This of course is bound to have important repercussions on the EU's role in the international arena, especially in terms of legitimacy of intervention and ability to bargain with conventional great powers. However, the analysis of the Ukrainian intervention has highlighted that a more confrontational stance with Russia is not necessarily beneficial for the ability of the EU to exercise its power in situations of crisis. The strength of the EU, once more, lies in its normative power, and its ability to persuade local actors that it is possible to co-operate to reduce violence. Other approaches, although appealing in times of absolute sovereignty, not only undermine the EU's efficiency, but also contradict the organization's diplomatic history.

#### **4. Avenues for Further Research**

This project has provided an answer to its research questions and made some contributions to the theoretical and empirical bodies of scholarship in the process. However, some of the theoretical advancements of the study are to be developed more thoroughly with work that remains to be done in two areas: the first one concerns the distinction between the EU's approach to conflict resolution and coercive diplomacy. This study had to make some approximations, typical of IR as a discipline, to be able to carry out the comparison that underpins it. In light of this investigation, scholars that study the impact of international processes on peace should dedicate particular

attention to the fact that the concept of coercive diplomacy seems to be ideologically linked with notions of hegemony. If this is the case, the current international arena that seems to be on the path of reconfiguration towards statehood is unlikely to fit the idea of forcible peace; and this is likely to spark a renewed reaction from the receiving end that can rotate around the word “invasion” instead of “intervention”.

The second issue that requires urgent attention is the broadening of comparisons beyond conventional IR structures. As noted by Arend Lijphart, ‘the different types of cases and their unequal potential contribution to theory-building should be kept in mind in selecting and analysing a single case’.(Lijphart, 1971: 693) However, by limiting comparisons between IOs, or states, or policies that have identical traits, scholarship seems to have overlooked the importance of discursive structures that set the objectives of actors and the aims of policies. In fact, if two actors claim that they are implementing specific policies, like intervention on humanitarian grounds, then more space should be dedicated to the comparison of their means and results even by acknowledging that their compositions are different. After all, among the most impactful developments of IR, Democratic Peace Theory and its related works compared structures completely different among themselves, like states in Africa with Latin American ones. And despite the evident limitations of these works, they offered insights that allowed scholars to identify mega-trends in international politics; like the Third Wave of Democratization. If this approximation was beneficial in the 1990s, then there should be no reasons why scholars shouldn’t continue on this path.

The fourth aspect that needs consideration concerns the study of QCA in IR; and how this has been treated in this thesis. Because of its scope, and its theoretical grounding on those liberal *plexuses* that call for a progressive blurring of the analytical line between hermeneutics and factual analysis, this thesis relied on official translations of

governmental speeches and interviews. However, there is little doubt that more data could have been extrapolated from an analysis of texts in their original form of output. For this reason, the thesis also indicates that more cooperation between linguists and IR thinkers could be beneficial to provide with more robust and coherent data.

The author of this study plans to focus his post-doctoral research around these three issues. Undoubtedly, addressing this agenda is a difficult, and yet objective. That the author perceives essential to fill the theoretical and empirical challenges posed by those actors that aim at proposing alternative paths to peace, like the EU. This thesis should be considered as a part of a project that is to be continued and surely not as the conclusive word on the topic.





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